REGIONAL FOREST AND FIRE CAPACITY PROGRAM CALIFORNIA CLIMATE BOND GRANT GUIDELINES – SECOND DRAFT

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Department of Conservation



California Department of Conservation



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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 landscape health and fire resilience consistent with the recommendations of the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan. This program is administered by the Department of Conservation (DOC) pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 4208 *et seq.*

Critical Dates

Draft Guidelines released June 5, 2026

Comments due July 21, 2026

Second Draft Guidelines released November 13, 2026

Comments due December 14, 2026

Final Guidelines released January 2027

Program Contacts

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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 within the Department of Conservation (DOC) 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 wildfire resilience. The RFFC Program works alongside the California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force (Task Force). Program work is focused on the four regions shown in Appendix A.

These Guidelines are intended to build on the prior work funded through the RFFC Program and governed by previous rounds of program guidelines. They will continue to accomplish the RFFC Program's goals and are intended to provide applicants with the expectations of what is required to receive Climate Bond funding. Recipients will receive grants, which they will use to support the growth, sustainability, and effectiveness of collaborative networks of local and state agencies, tribes, and organizations working to improve fire-adapted landscape conditions and the socio-ecological resilience of communities, and to elevate, integrate, and expand wildfire and landscape resilience work consistent with Public Resources Code sections 4208.1 and 4208.2, the 2021 California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan and successor plans (Action Plan), Agreement for Shared Stewardship of California's Forests and Rangelands, and the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024.

For the purposes of the RFFC Program, wildfire and landscape resilience refers to the social and ecological resilience of communities, resources, and fire-prone landscapes influenced by wildfire and related disturbances exacerbated by climate change. Wildfire and landscape resilience has the same meaning as wildfire and forest resilience as defined in the 2021 Action Plan but uses the term "landscapes" instead of "forests" to better reflect the inclusion of chapparal, grasslands, and other landscape types.

DOC Responsibilities

With the RFFC Program, DOC performs both a traditional grant management role, but also a significant support role. DOC is a member of the Task Force, in addition to related workgroups and committees. In this capacity, DOC provides regional coordination, facilitates peer-learning across grants, offers technical assistance, and facilitates information collection that is used for statewide reporting.

Block Grant Goals and Objectives

The RFFC Program fosters high-quality partnerships that are built on trust, mutual respect, authentic engagement, and shared decision-making to drive the development of regional priority strategies that will restore health and resilience to communities, forests, and other wildfire-prone landscapes. Block grants accomplish multiple program objectives and program activities at varying geographic scales over long timeframes. Each region has unique circumstances and histories that influence present conditions, including deviations from historical fire regimes. RFFC Program funding is designed to accommodate these unique circumstances.

To that end, Block Grantees are expected to achieve the following objectives:

- Invest in place-based practitioners and partnerships, increasing and sustaining the essential capacity, skills, and diverse expertise needed to achieve durable landscape and wildfire resilience.
- Support the development, implementation, and maintenance of efficient local and regional project pipelines that meet regional and statewide wildfire and landscape resilience goals, and advance other State Conservation Strategies, particularly through the creation and utilization of Regional Priority Plans.
- Strengthen resilient networks between collaborators, so that the systems that enable action at scale are adaptive, efficient, durable, and coordinated with key state, tribal, and federal agencies on landscape and wildfire resilience actions.
- Provide meaningful and direct benefits to priority populations (See Appendix C: Meaningful and Direct Benefits to Priority Populations and Communities).

California Native American Tribes

DOC recognizes that California Native American tribes (tribes) are the original stewards of these lands and hold enduring cultural, spiritual, and ecological relationships with fire and the land. Supporting tribal knowledge, practices, and priorities is essential to advancing the wildfire resilience strategies set forth by the Action Plan in a way that is both effective and culturally grounded. DOC also recognizes ecological knowledge and traditional stewardship activities such as cultural burning, and gathering and restoration of culturally significant species as foundational wildfire resilience activities. Therefore, the RFFC Program encourages the prioritization of tribal stewardship throughout California's wildfire resilience work.

California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force and Action Plan

DOC is a member of the Task Force and is responsible for implementing components of the Action Plan through the administration and delivery of the RFFC Program. The State of California issued its first Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan in 2021, which established a shared vision and framework for federal, state, local, and private partners to increase the pace, scale, and effectiveness of wildfire resilience statewide (Pub. Resources Code 4771). Public Resources Code 4771 codifies the Action Plan and requires the Task Force to update the Action Plan every five years. **[DOC will link to the 2026 Action Plan in the Final Guidelines.]**

Regional Block Grantees and their partners are responsible for downscaling, adapting, and implementing the actions and objectives of the Action Plan, along with integrating regionally specific context and priorities into those objectives. Regional Block Grantees also serve as the primary conduit between their regions and the Task Force, communicating regional conditions, priorities, and expertise to inform statewide strategy and coordination.

State Conservation Strategies

The RFFC Program goals contribute to other statewide strategies including:

- Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy
- Nature-Based Solutions Climate Targets

- Conservation of 30% of California's Lands and Coastal Waters by 2030 (30x30 Initiative)
- Outdoors for All Strategy
- Climate Adaptation Strategy
- Climate Change Scoping Plan
- Agreement for Shared Stewardship of California's Forest and Rangelands
- California Natural Resources Agency's Tribal Stewardship Policy

Program Funding

The Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024 (Climate Bond) authorizes the appropriation of up to $185 million to DOC for the RFFC Program. The Climate Bond requires that 40% of this funding support priority populations, with 10% of total bond funds going to severely disadvantaged communities. DOC aims to allocate another 10% of total bond funds to projects that maintain and increase tribal stewardship that supports wildfire resilience, with the intent that those allocations will contribute to meeting the 40% priority population requirement. To the extent feasible, DOC will allocate funding in accordance with the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan.

The Climate Bond specifies that this program funding be used to: (1) increase regional capacity to prioritize, develop, and implement projects that improve forest health and fire resilience, (2) implement community fire preparedness demonstration projects, (3) facilitate greenhouse gas emissions reductions, and (4) increase carbon sequestration in forests and other landscapes across regions and throughout the state. The RFFC Program will meet these funding obligations program-wide by ensuring grant awards contribute to each requirement.

Upon appropriation of funds by the Legislature for this purpose, or at other times when funds are made available, such as through an Interagency Agreement or if funds reserved for a particular purpose are released, DOC will issue new grants and/or allocate funding to increase grants funded under these guidelines, as determined by DOC to best meet the objectives of Public Resources Code sections 4208.1 and 4208.2, the Climate Bond, and the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan, and as further stipulated in Section 2: Block Grantee Eligibility, Selection, and Award.

Confidentiality and Publicity

Applicants and their partners should be aware that all data, plans, drawings, specifications, surveys, studies, and other written or graphic work submitted with the application or produced in the performance of the grant are public records that may be publicly released in accordance with the California Public Records Act (Gov. Code §§ 7920.000 *et seq.*).

However, certain culturally sensitive information related to tribes may be withheld from public release. If an applicant believes that the information provided is culturally sensitive or is Tribal Financial Information, DOC requests that the applicant contact DOC to discuss the material before submitting.

Grantees will be required to publicize work and accomplishments and comply with specific requirements for publicity, including signage, as outlined in the grant agreement.

Section 2: Block Grant Type, Eligibility, Selection, and Award

The RFFC Program supports two types of block grants: Regional and Coordinating. This section explains the differences between the two types of block grants, details the eligibility criteria for each, and provides information on the selection and funding award process.

For the purposes of these guidelines, the "regional" scale refers to the Regional Block Grant scale, which may be smaller than the four super-region geographic areas that guide program funding allocations shown in Appendix A.

Regional Block Grants

DOC provides Regional Block Grants to eligible regional entities to support and coordinate the efforts of a regional partnership by building and sustaining the partnership's capacity to increase wildfire and landscape resilience within the region. The geographic area covered by a Regional Block Grant may span multiple counties or parts thereof, and its size is dependent upon the scale that is most appropriate to accomplish the Program's goals and objectives in that region.

Regional Block Grants focus on developing and carrying out Regional Priority Plans and Implementation Projects for their service area through subgrant awards (subawards) or subcontracts with local organizations. Subawards may range in scale from project-specific grants to block grants.

Required Regional Block Grant Objectives

DOC will provide directed block grants to selected eligible regional entities to accomplish the objectives described in Section 1: Introduction and Program Summary and in accordance with Public Resources Code sections 4208.1 and 4208.2. Regional Block Grantees will be required to complete the activities described in detail in Section 3: Regional Block Grant Activities and Section 5: Block Grant Administration. Sections 3 and 5 outline specific requirements pertaining to those activities that must be met alongside all other requirements stipulated in the Guidelines.

Entities Eligible to Receive a Regional Block Grant

Regional entities eligible to receive a Regional Block Grant, as described in Public Resources Code section 4208, are state conservancies, local governments, tribal governments, resource conservation districts, joint powers authorities, and nongovernmental organizations with a history of implementing related projects, demonstrated capacity to work across regional partners, and ability to serve as fiscal administrators for the program.

Regional Block Grantees serve as backbone organizations that build the leadership, organizational dynamics, agreements, and physical and social infrastructure needed to mobilize a pipeline of projects addressing wildfire and landscape resilience objectives, including community wildfire resilience needs in that region.

Selection Criteria

Eligible regional entities must demonstrate all the following characteristics to be considered for a Regional Block Grant:

- Ability to coordinate the many organizations across their region necessary to meet program goals.
- Existing strong regional partnerships, ability to provide support, and have the capacity and skills to expand these partnerships.
- Ability to conduct Regional Priority Planning and other wildfire resilience planning efforts throughout their region.
- Fiscal and administrative control systems to adequately oversee the management and expenditure of block grant awards.
- Ability to serve as a backbone organization that both administers the block grant to subawardees and equitably represents regional needs.
- Policy and program expertise relevant to meeting program goals.

In all cases, selection of Regional Block Grantees will be made based on the relevant regionally specific context, including relative differences in capacity across regions and within specific strategic program areas.

Coordinating Block Grants

Coordinating Block Grants support the statewide and cross-regional implementation of the RFFC Program through the coordination of and technical assistance to Regional Block Grantees, as well as by supporting landscape health and fire resilience efforts throughout the state, in accordance with Public Resources Code section 4208.1(c). Coordinating Block Grants may fund activities such as statewide, topic-specific training and networking, fund activities identified as priorities by tribes, and/or address key capacity gaps that are not otherwise being addressed in other areas of the program.

The geographic area covered by Coordinating Block Grantees may be statewide or across multiple Regional Block Grants. Coordinating Block Grants may also be narrower in scope than Regional Block Grants. More information about Coordinating Block Grants can be found in Section 4: Coordinating Block Grant Activities.

Coordinating Block Grant Objectives

DOC may provide Coordinating Block Grants to eligible coordinating organizations to perform work at the statewide or cross-regional scale and to help implement the program objectives described in Section 1: Introduction and Program Summary. Coordinating Block Grants are required to complete the activities described in detail in Section 4: Coordinating Block Grant Activities and Section 5: Block Grant Administration, and to comply with the specific requirements outlined in those sections alongside all other requirements stipulated in the Guidelines.

Coordinating Block Grants support statewide program implementation by working toward one or more of the following objectives at the statewide or cross-regional scale:

- Coordinating, convening, providing opportunities for peer learning, and/or providing trainings and technical assistance to RFFC Program and wildfire resilience network(s) across the state, or a subsection of these networks.
- Addressing a cross-cutting bottleneck within local, sub-regional, or regional project pipelines that has implications across regions.
- Piloting infrastructure to tackle a cross-regional or statewide issue at scale, such as expanding biomass utilization.

- Providing for organizational capacity building for wildfire resilience needs, conducting planning efforts, and building broad-based capacity where gaps exist in the Regional Block Grant framework.
- Other activities that address gaps or needs in the Regional Block Grant framework that have impacts at the cross-regional or statewide scale.

Entities Eligible to Receive a Coordinating Block Grant

Entities eligible to receive a Coordinating Block Grant are local governments, tribal governments, resource conservation districts, joint powers authorities, and nongovernmental organizations with a history of providing technical assistance and demonstrated capacity to coordinate regional partners across the state.

Selection Criteria

DOC will consider the following factors when selecting Coordinating Block Grantees for funding:

- Experience and expertise in conducting effective and inclusive outreach across diverse communities and regions.
- Experience and expertise in developing peer-to-peer or cross-regional sharing of project implementation strategies and skills.
- Strong relationships throughout the state or cross-regionally with primary actors in landscape health and wildfire resilience planning at scale, including Regional Block Grantees.
- Fiscal and administrative control systems to adequately oversee the management and expenditure of block grant awards.
- Policy and program expertise relevant to meeting program goals.

In all cases, selection of Coordinating Block Grantees for funding will be made based on the relevant statewide context and support needed for specific strategic program areas.

Interagency Collaboration

Following the spirit of the Climate Bond, AB 109 (Gabriel, Stat. 2026, ch. 19) sec. 15.04, the California Natural Resources Agency's (CNRA) Delivering a Successful Climate Bond best practices guide, and building on the Program's existing relationship with other state agencies, DOC may partner with other state agencies to administer and implement the program where doing so benefits the program delivery as a whole.

Allocation Considerations, Selection, and Award of Funds

DOC will award block grants to eligible entities through a directed, two-phase process as needed to best advance the objectives of the Program. Allocation of funding shall be based, to the extent feasible, on the Task Force's Action Plan. The specific distribution of Climate Bond funding allocation between regions and grant types will be described in each Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) and may vary based on legislative appropriations and the needs of the Program.

Notice of Funding Availability

Upon appropriation of funds by the Legislature and prior to the award and distribution of those funds, DOC will prepare a NOFA to notify potential applicants that the Program

is accepting funding requests. Additional NOFAs may be released to allocate residual funds, or as necessary to fully obligate appropriated funds and meet the program's statutory mandate. The NOFA will:

- Apportion appropriated funds for different program purposes based on an analysis of progress toward the Program's goals under prior rounds of funding. When apportioning funds in the NOFA, DOC will prioritize:
    - Issuing Regional Block Grants to new or emerging regional partnerships to address critical gaps in program coverage.
    - Investing in the core capacity of regional partnerships with the essential capacities to implement completed Regional Priority Plans, as defined in Section 3: Regional Block Grant Activities, so that those regional partnerships can partner with the state as envisioned in the Action Plan.
    - Effectively advancing strategic regional and state priorities identified in consultation with the Task Force and consistent with the current version of the Action Plan.
- Detail grant conditions specific to that round of funding, such as additional eligibility requirements, reporting provisions, or maximum award amounts.
- Specify the timeline and any additional process requirements for solicitation and award of funds relevant to that NOFA.
- Describes the Technical Assistance (TA) DOC may offer throughout the award process.

Allocation Considerations

Final allocation of funds from any given appropriation in each NOFA will be determined based on the extent to which potential Block Grantees meet the selection criteria for the relevant grant type, the priorities outlined in the NOFA, and:

- Regionally specific funding needs informed by current funding levels, funding gaps, rates of expenditure, and available program funds.
- Identified intra-regional, regional, cross-regional, or statewide capacity needs, as relevant, and the applicant's ability to meet those needs.
- Maintenance of geographic equity in funding across regions.
- The geographic distribution of potential Block Grantees.
- Regions' readiness for investment in Program activities (*e.g.*, capacity building, planning, project development, implementation,) as determined by the outcomes of previous funding rounds, and/or a statewide needs assessment, if available.
- Sector-specific opportunities to advance shared strategies of statewide importance as established by the Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan.
- Opportunities to address barriers to funding, particularly for priority populations and historically underrepresented communities.

Application and Approval Process

Phase 1 (Request for Pre-proposals): To effectively direct awards to accomplish program objectives, DOC will accept informational pre-proposals from prospective Block Grantees as stipulated in the relevant NOFA. Pre-proposals for all block grants must describe:

- the organizational structure and background of the prospective Block Grantee,

- the geographic context and extent of the prospective Block Grantee's wildfire and landscape resilience work,
- identified wildfire and landscape resilience needs,
- ready opportunities for implementable actions to address those needs,
- desired long-term outcomes of investment, and
- an estimate of funding needed to meet the described need.

Prospective Regional Block Grantees must also describe the current status of regional planning efforts, the governance and background of the regional partnership(s) within their service area, and how the proposed activities will support implementation and iteration of those planning efforts.

Prospective Coordinating Block Grantees must also describe their experience working at the cross-regional and/or statewide scales, and how they will coordinate with Regional Block Grants.

DOC will provide technical assistance during the pre-proposal process, as described in the given NOFA.

Following receipt of informational pre-proposals, Program Staff will review submitted material and may conduct interviews or request additional information as needed to ensure DOC has a robust understanding of:

- the range of interested parties for the current allocation and their respective eligibility for award,
- whether proposed actions of any particular entity are aligned with the program goals, and their relative fitness for a Regional Block Grant or Coordinating Block Grant, and
- the range of funding needs and opportunities throughout the state.

On conclusion of the review process, Program Staff will compare the pre-proposals against the selection criteria for the relevant grant type, the priorities stipulated in the NOFA, and the allocation considerations described above. Program staff will use this information to prepare recommendations for the block grants that can most effectively meet the program objectives. These recommendations may include, but are not limited to, reducing or augmenting requested funding amounts, combining or funding overlapping proposals in a given region, and offering technical assistance to applicants not recommended for award, and will be made as needed to best effectuate implementation of the program at DOC's discretion.

If multiple prospective Regional Block Grantees are eligible in the same geography, DOC will prioritize direct award to the entity that is 1) best equipped to implement the program at the scale needed to successfully implement the Task Force's Action Plan, and 2) most able to leverage prior State investments in Wildfire Resilience Planning. Program staff will recommend provisional awards for the Department Director's review and decision. DOC will notify applicants not selected for provisional awards. If applicable to a funded proposal, DOC will connect the applicant with the Block Grantee for their region to facilitate their continued engagement with the program.

Phase 2 (Negotiated Award Consultations and Final Award Approval): Upon Department Director approval, DOC will notify recipients of provisional awards and invite recipients to participate in a Negotiated Award Consultation to develop a full proposal that aligns with these guidelines. As part of this proposal, awardees will submit a program of work and budget, as described below. DOC will then review the proposed program of work and budget and negotiate with awardees to revise both to ensure consistency with funding availability and the goals, objectives, and statutory requirements of the Program.

If a mutually acceptable proposal is reached, RFFC Program staff will recommend the proposal for award by the Department Director. If approved, DOC will announce the awards on its website, the negotiated program of work and budget will be incorporated into a grant agreement between DOC and the awardee, and the grant agreement will be executed.

Overview of Grant Execution

1. DOC will announce final awards as described above.
2. Each Block Grantee must enter into a grant agreement with DOC or amend an existing agreement that was originally entered into under these guidelines to incorporate additional awarded funds, as determined by DOC. The Block Grantee must sign and return the grant agreement to DOC within three months of the award date or risk forfeiting their award.
3. The grant agreement is considered fully executed once DOC's authorized signatory has signed the grant agreement.
4. Once DOC notifies the Block Grantee that the grant agreement has been fully executed, the Block Grantee should promptly commence work.

Workplan Requirements

Workplans must consist of a program of work and an associated budget. The workplan must demonstrate how program requirements will be met. DOC will work with Block Grantees to identify additional resources and intermediate deliverables needed to support the workplan, such as a staffing resource plan, an outreach and engagement strategy, metrics and reporting approach, and schedule of key activities.

Block Grantees should clearly describe how their workplan will provide meaningful and direct benefits to priority populations to meet the priority population benefits requirements detailed in Section 1: Introduction and Program Summary during the workplan development process. Awardees must allocate a portion of their total grant award for activities that meet this requirement. More information about how workplans will be assessed to meet this requirement is available in Appendix C: Meaningful and Direct Benefits to Priority Populations and Communities.

Performance Period and Grant Term

Grants will be made for a total maximum term of up to seven years, pending appropriate budget authority. Block Grantees must complete all tasks and deliverables within the grant term and must submit required documentation in a timely manner to ensure payment on a regular basis and before funds revert.

As conditions shift and the need arises, DOC and Block Grantees may amend the workplan and budget consistent with these guidelines and the terms of the grant

agreement to meet the program goals and objectives. Block Grantees requesting amendments must also submit a justification demonstrating why the proposed changes lead to the best possible outcome for the program. Amendments must be made in coordination with DOC, in a timely manner, and requested at least three months before the end of the grant term.

Section 3: Regional Block Grant Activities

Regional Block Grantee Essential Activities

Working with and through their regional partnerships, Regional Block Grantees must engage in the following core program activities, which are described in more detail below:

- Conduct and implement **regional priority planning.**
- Administer **project development activities.**
- Administer **project implementation activities.**
- **Build and sustain capacity** among regional partners.
- Lead **outreach and engagement.**
- Participate in Task Force efforts to **coordinate regions.**

RFFC Program activities and deliverables are expected to differ for each regional partnership due to varying geographic, biophysical, and social characteristics throughout the state. Unless specified, program activities and deliverables do not need to be developed or completed in a specific format or medium, and it is expected that every regional partnership or grant objective supported by the RFFC Program will need to adopt solutions and formats fitting the regional needs.

For example, specific activities and deliverables may be developed under one unified effort for an entire regional partnership while other work may be developed on a subregional basis. In all cases, RFFC Program activities and deliverables should be integrated into a larger regional effort through collaboration and coordination of a shared set of priorities, strategies, assessment, methodologies, or other guiding principles. Regional Block Grantees are encouraged to incorporate existing resources, data, and plans (*e.g.,* Community Wildfire Protection Plans, Forest Service Five-Year Plans) into all activities and deliverables.

The following subsections describe the Regional Block Grantee Essential Activities in detail.

Regional Priority Planning

Regional Block Grantees must develop, update and maintain, and implement a Regional Priority Plan (RPP). An RPP is a planning framework that identifies, evaluates, coordinates, prioritizes, and advances wildfire and landscape resilience projects and strategies within a given region. RPPs:

- Identify, evaluate, prioritize, and plan for the health and resilience of fire-adapted landscapes and communities within their region.
- Coordinate planning and management efforts with an "all lands" approach across jurisdictions and ownership.
- Build strong regional support for plans and projects through regional partnerships.
- Establish connections to diverse funding opportunities that support the RPP objectives, help coordinate funding opportunities with partners, and support reporting on outcomes, as needed.
- Organize and communicate regional prioritization of projects and strategies consistent with Task Force goals and strategies.
- Include three key elements, described in detail below, to ensure consistency, communicability, and short- and long-term utility of the plan.

RPPs which meet all these criteria, in DOC's sole determination, are considered complete. Complete RPPs may have been developed in prior rounds of funding, developed independently of the RFFC Program, or be completed during the course of the Block Grant.

Tribes that have an approach for identifying, coordinating, prioritizing, and advancing tribal priorities that is functionally similar to an RPP and aligned with RFFC Program objectives may use funds to further develop and implement that approach in lieu of a standard Regional Priority Plan.

Regional Block Grantees that do not have a complete RPP must develop one. The following activities must be included in RPP development:

- Developing broad-based regional partnerships among interested parties 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 and traditional knowledge, and statewide strategies to develop priorities and decision-making strategies that respond to environmental and social conditions within the region.
- Incorporating principles of collaborative governance into planning and decision-making processes.
- Updating and maintaining the RPP based on new information, activities, and conditions.
- Identifying and advancing priority projects and management activities based on desired landscape conditions and compiling projects into landscape portfolios.

Regional Block Grantees with a complete RPP are expected to use a portion of their RFFC Program funding to implement and maintain their RPP. Plan implementation and maintenance activities may relate to other eligible activities, including but not limited to:

- Proactive reevaluation and adaptation of key elements of the RPP.
- Continued project development, implementation, monitoring, and outcomes reporting.
- Further coordination at local, regional, and statewide scales, including with tribes.
- Expanded outreach and engagement.
- Deepening existing partnerships and developing new partnerships.
- Grant writing and leveraging or matching funds for further plan implementation.
- Targeted investments in essential capacities to advance plan implementation and maintenance.
- Coordinating with DOC to compile, track, and maintain project-level data in alignment with Task Force objectives.

Plan implementation and maintenance activities should advance priorities identified in the RPP, assess and respond to the plan's effectiveness, especially in a changing climate, and invest in the plan's durability and long-term relevance. RPPs should be living documents able to adapt and respond to a region's needs.

Key Elements of an RPP

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 fire-adapted landscape priorities within their jurisdictions. RPPs must work to advance policies and programs that enhance coordination, collaboration, and effective natural resource management within their region.

RPPs must be developed with broad participation of regional communities, tribes, tribal-led organizations, cultural practitioners, public and governmental agencies, community-based organizations, collaboratives, and other organizations. Regional Block Grantees will coordinate the development of the RPP for their partnership, working directly with organizations in their region and incorporating collaborative and adaptive management governing structures into decision-making and throughout the planning process.

Assessment & Methodology

RPPs must include:

- An assessment of the landscape conditions in their region that is informed by the regional profiles developed by the Task Force's Science Advisory Panel and resource kits developed by an interagency research team. The assessments should characterize the regional landscape with respect to holistic social and ecological components of wildfire and landscape resilience. The regional resource kits provide a starting point for these analyses, but RPPs may include local knowledge, traditional knowledge, region-specific data, and/or other appropriate tools to characterize the regional landscape.
- A methodology for decision making, project identification, and prioritization that is appropriate for the region, the partnership, and consistent with state and federal strategies, including strategies and key actions recommended by the Task Force.

Landscape Portfolios of Projects

RPPs must include a collection or collections of priority projects by landscape that, taken together, respond to identified conditions and priorities within that landscape. Portfolios of priority projects should:

- Be geographically explicit, with delineable boundaries for projects and activities.
- Provide multiple benefits consistent with regional, state, and federal priorities for wildfire and fire-adapted landscape resilience.
- Identify organization(s) that would be responsible for project implementation.
- Have broad support from stakeholders in the region.
- Include projects at different stages of readiness suitable for implementation in sequence.
- Be cross-jurisdictional where appropriate, aligning efforts and needs across ownership, land types, and areas of responsibility to complete the plan's goals.

Regional Priority Plan Readiness and Essential Capacities

Regional Block Grantees who determine their RPP is complete will work with DOC Staff to assess that RPP's completeness and readiness for implementation, as well as the extent of the region's essential capacities, as defined below, to implement the RPP.

Essential capacities that will be assessed include:

- **Administrative and fiscal capacity:** Ability to administer landscape grant funding across a region, adhere to State processes, and encumber and expend funds effectively, efficiently, and strategically, and report expenditures with transparency and accountability.
- **Project pipeline:** Ability to move projects from concept to shovel-ready at an efficient pace and scale needed to achieve regional outcomes.
- **Operational capacity:** The essential workforce, skills, licenses, training, equipment, vehicles, and other resources necessary to implement fire-adapted landscape resilience work at the regional scale.
- **Alignment, engagement, and regional partnership:** Ability to coordinate, align, and engage with tribes, other plans, practitioners, and communities to develop projects, make decisions, and incorporate a diverse set of priorities and benefits to priority populations.
- **Adaptive Capacity:** A process and metrics that guide a region to assess progress, evaluate outcomes, and apply adaptive management to continuously improve their wildfire resilience strategies and implementation.

Not all essential capacities need to be held by a single entity but should be met through the related regional partnership.

DOC will assess the essential capacities of a Regional Block Grantee and regional partnership to determine the RPP's completeness and readiness for implementation. These assessments will be performed through collaborative meetings between DOC and Regional Block Grantees and/or members of the regional partnership. After the assessments, DOC staff will either identify areas of the RPP that need further development or confirm that the RPP is complete and ready for implementation. DOC may also use this assessment process to increase inter-agency awareness of RPPs.

Project Development

Regional Block Grantees may use a portion of this funding to support 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 be comprehensive enough to 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 maintain or increase ecosystem health and capacity to adapt to changing conditions, fire resilience, public health, and human safety. Regional Block Grantees must work in collaboration with their regional partners to develop projects and obtain necessary permits. Project development strategies should be equitable and should include support for areas, communities, and organizations with lower capacity.

Examples of eligible project development activities include:

- Preparing project plans, specifications, and cost estimates that will result in a specific project.
- Acquiring permits for specific projects.
- Analysis required for CEQA and/or NEPA documentation.
- Performing necessary studies/surveys and/or developing necessary project designs related to a specific site or physical project.
- Conducting outreach and engagement, partnership development, and other tasks needed to create and sustain a project pipeline for multiple years.
- Obtaining implementation funding from third parties.

Project development and permitting may occur in parallel with the development, implementation, and maintenance of the RPP.

Project Implementation

A portion of RFFC Program funding must be used to complete implementation projects, which are tangible projects that have ground-disturbing, direct, or reasonably foreseeable indirect impacts on the environment. The RFFC Program supports two types of implementation activities: RPP Portfolio Implementation Projects and Demonstration Projects. Information about both types of implementation activities and additional requirements for each are provided in the subsections below.

All implementation projects must reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire, improve a landscape or community's resilience to fire, and/or increase the pace of ecosystem recovery post-fire. DOC must review and accept proposed implementation activities before related costs are incurred. Categories of implementation projects eligible for funding include:

- Vegetation management projects for landscape resilience, regardless of wildland urban interface designation.
- Community scale fuel breaks and strategic buffers.
- Use of beneficial fire, which may include cultural fire, prescribed fire, or hardening potential operational delineations (PODs) for strategic fire readiness.
- Ignition reduction treatments and activities.
- Biomass utilization.
- Parcel-scale defensible space and home hardening projects.
- Conservation and restoration projects with fire resilience objectives, including native plant restoration, non-forestland conservation and restoration, and post-fire landscape restoration and reforestation, and excluding land acquisition and easements.
- Park and recreation enhancement projects with wildfire and landscape resilience objectives, including community wildfire resilience objectives.
- Integrated pest management.
- Native plant nurseries to support fire-adapted landscape restoration and reforestation.
- Hardening of essential community infrastructure such as roads and water, energy, and communication facilities, to reduce its vulnerability to wildfire hazards and improve community wildfire preparedness.

- Retreatment or maintenance projects aligned with wildfire and landscape resilience objectives.

Implementation Projects may include specific components that are not eligible for RFFC Program funding (such as land acquisition) and still be eligible for partial RFFC Program funding, as long as those ineligible components are funded by other sources. Projects will not be eligible for RFFC Program implementation funding if inconsistent with program requirements. Examples of implementation projects that are **not** consistent with these requirements are:

- Projects that conflict with existing local, regional, or statewide strategies.
- Projects that prioritize lowest cost methods of implementation over other methods to the detriment of ecological resilience objectives.
- Projects focused on wildfire response rather than prevention and/or recovery.
- Environmental mitigation/remediation projects that are mandated by law.

Types of Implementation Projects

The RFFC Program funds two types of implementation projects: RPP Portfolio Implementation Projects and Demonstration Projects, as described below.

RPP Portfolio Implementation Projects

Regional Block Grantees with a complete RPP and who have demonstrated sufficient essential capacities (see section on Regional Priority Plan Readiness and Essential Capacities) must use a portion of their funding to support implementation of their RPP project portfolio. It is not anticipated that all projects in the portfolio will be funded by RFFC Program funding.

To be approved for funding, RPP Portfolio Implementation Projects must be identified through an RPP or equivalent tribal approach and align with the goals set forth by the Climate Bond, the Action Plan, and the RFFC Program.

Portfolio Implementation Projects selected for funding must be designed, to the extent practicable, to:

- Involve participation from multiple partners and work across jurisdictions and ownership, when applicable.
- Maximize positive impacts to ecological function.
- Prioritize multiple benefits and/or meet the objectives of multiple state conservation strategies.
- Plan for and incorporate costs to cover project-related capacity needs, including costs associated with fiscal and administrative activities, time for meaningful collaboration, and required technical and operational skills, etc., such that the project sustains or increases the region's ability to implement projects.
- Increase regional workforce capacity.
- Prioritize meaningful, project-related career development; on-the-job learning opportunities; health, safety, and professional trainings; and positive workplace culture.
- Meaningfully benefit priority populations.

In addition to project specific requirements, Regional Block Grantees conducting RPP portfolio implementation must, where applicable, prioritize projects that use the services of the California Conservation Corps (PRC § 14000 *et seq.*) or Certified Community Conservation Corps (PRC §14507.5), as well as projects that use the services of Tribal Conservation Corps (collectively, the Corps) and support sustainable career pathways in the wildfire resilience field in accordance with The Workforce, Career Pathways, and Workplace Culture Strategy and Action Plan. If a project utilizes the services of the Corps to promote workforce development, Regional Block Grantees should seek to provide maximum benefit to all corpsmembers by maximizing educational opportunities and on-the-job training.

Demonstration Projects

Regional Block Grantees may use a portion of these funds to complete demonstration projects. Regional Block Grantees do not need to have a complete RPP to use funds to implement demonstration projects, however, Regional Block Grantees must work with their grant manager to determine if a project is eligible for RFFC Program implementation funding as a demonstration project.

Demonstration projects must:

- Implement new, innovative, and/or underutilized techniques, technology, or approaches, which could be scaled up and/or replicated beyond the demonstration project. Underutilized techniques or approaches may include tribally led wildfire resilience stewardship activities or projects that incorporate tribal cultural knowledge.
- Include outreach and evaluation components that will allow the Regional Block Grantee to determine the effectiveness of the techniques, technology, or approaches and share results with other regions and practitioners.

Demonstration projects should seek to:

- Maximize desired outcomes of the RFFC Program as well as the Action Plan strategies and objectives.
- Measurably achieve multiple benefits of the RFFC Program, including capacity building or sustaining as a core objective of the project.
- Incorporate participation from multiple partners and funding sources.
- Support regional workforce development and career pathway opportunities, when feasible, including utilizing the services of the Corps.
- Integrate benefits to priority populations within the region.

Implementation Project Approval

For both RPP Portfolio Implementation and Demonstration Projects, Regional Block Grantees must submit implementation project information for review and approval by the agency administering the Block Grant (approving agency). Block Grantees may use an implementation project packet template provided by DOC or submit an equivalent summary of project information. The administering agency must approve each project prior to the release of implementation project grant funds and implementation work commencing. Funding for project implementation will only be released upon the approving agency's determination that projects are consistent with the objectives of the program, as described further below. Block Grantees are

responsible for timely submission of the implementation project information to allow for approving agency review and avoid any project delays.

Regional Block Grantees providing subgrants for project implementation activities are responsible for submitting implementation project information on behalf of the subgrantee to the approving agency. Regional Block Grantees are encouraged to include the implementation project packet template in any requests for proposals or early subaward processes and communications so that potential subawardees are aware of these guidelines' submission requirements. Questions about project eligibility should be brought to DOC as soon as possible, especially when utilizing subawards, to avoid any delays in reviews or approvals. Implementation project information may be compiled for a single project or a portfolio of projects. Whether using the implementation project packet template provided by DOC or an equivalent summary of project information, Block Grantees must submit the following information:

- Basic information for each project, including a description of what the project is, what will be accomplished by the project, the project timeline and any other relevant information.
- Description of how the project or the portfolios of projects is relevant to the RPP, if applicable.
- Project readiness information, including specifics on all tasks that need to be done for the project to commence.
- Summary of environmental compliance requirements, including CEQA and NEPA documentation and permitting needs.
- The project's draft monitoring plan, which must include all elements listed in the *Implementation Project Monitoring and Reporting* section, below.
- Feasibility of completing the project within the grant term.
- Project budget, funding need and any project funding in hand.
- Partnership with California Conservation Corps, or Certified Community Conservation Corps or Tribal Conservation Corps, as feasible.
- Alignment with the RFFC Program, Climate Bond, Task Force, and any other relevant agency or strategy objectives.
- Direct and meaningful benefits to priority populations.

Implementation project information may be submitted on a rolling basis throughout the grant term. Once implementation project information is submitted, the approving agency will review the information provided for each project and reach one of the following determinations: more information is needed and a final determination cannot be reached; the project is rejected because it does not meet the program's objectives, with justification for the rejection provided; or, the project meets the program's objectives, is approved, and may move forward, with justification for approval provided. DOC will rely on information provided by Regional Block Grantees and, if applicable, may refer to information in the RPP to make a determination.

The information provided for approved implementation projects will also be used to fulfill Climate Bond reporting requirements, ensure Regional Block Grants are providing direct and meaningful benefits to priority populations as specified in these guidelines, and confirm that Regional Block Grantees have completed any relevant environmental compliance.

Implementation Project Monitoring and Reporting

For all approved Portfolio Implementation and Demonstration Projects, Regional Block Grantees are responsible for tracking data about project objectives, treatment type, location, progress, and other performance measures throughout the life of the project. A draft monitoring plan for collecting and maintaining this data must be included in the implementation project information during initial project review. Data should be retained for the duration of the grant term and retention period and provided to DOC upon request. See more details about expectations under the Reporting section.

Building and Sustaining Capacity

Regional Block Grantees are expected to use a portion of the funds from this program to build and sustain capacity to respond to wildfire resilience needs and priorities throughout their region. Activities to build or sustain capacity should help Regional Block Grantees and their partners manage and maintain increases in project development and implementation workload necessary to meet the goals of the Action Plan over the next five to ten years.

Capacity building and sustaining efforts may include:

- Investments in partner and local staff development, which may include staff time, skill building, training, partnership development, and more.
- Funding new and/or critical positions such as facilitators, foresters, burn bosses, Tribal Historic Program Officer(s) (THPOs), Tribal Liaisons, Cultural Fire Managers/Prescribed Burn Practitioners, project managers, and program managers.
- Acquiring or utilizing tools, equipment, and resources to increase partner capacity for planning and implementation of wildfire and landscape resilience projects.
- Organizational capacity activities such as access to financial or legal services for due diligence, as applicable, associated with project development.
- Developing new pilot projects and programs and expanding, replicating, adapting, or scaling successful existing programs.
- Participation and/or partnership with existing workforce programs such as the Corps and Prescribed Burn Associations.
- Providing orientation and training to participating Corpsmembers.
- Providing or securing technical assistance for partners.
- Fellowships and/or stipends for individuals to participate in trainings and events that further the objectives of the RFFC Program, when those individuals otherwise would not be able to participate, especially with regard to underrepresented individuals.

Regional Block Grantees should coordinate with organizations representing different interests (local, tribal, community, private, etc.) to meaningfully meet their needs, including watershed coordinators, community-based organizations and collaboratives, county wildfire coordinators, local CAL FIRE representatives, US Forest Service representatives, and others conducting local and regional wildfire and landscape resilience work.

Outreach and Engagement

Regional Block Grantees are expected to use a portion of the funds from this program to lead strategic outreach, engagement, and communication related to wildfire and landscape resilience at the local and regional levels. Outreach and engagement activities should shape other RFFC Program tasks, including equitable capacity building efforts, partnership development, and project development and implementation activities.

Regional Block Grantees must use broad and diverse methods to engage communities and stakeholders alongside tribes and other governing entities within each region. At a minimum, Regional Block Grantees must:

- Involve fire and forestry professionals, tribes and cultural practitioners, other relevant professionals (*e.g.*, emergency and disaster response, environmental justice, public health, etc.) and other key stakeholders that can play a role in wildfire and landscape resilience within the region.
- Establish guiding principles or processes to ensure engagement activities meet locally identified needs. These principles or processes should be regularly evaluated, and engagement approaches should be adjusted as necessary to maximize positive outcomes across different communities and interest groups. Regional Block Grantees and subgrantees must consider the social-ecological factors that affect wildfire vulnerability of their communities and landscapes, including demographics, language and education access, and economic factors.
- Incorporate methods of engagement that facilitate direct participation and eliminate barriers for communities and organizations to participate, such as activities described in Appendix D: Best Practices for Priority Population Engagement

As backbone organizations, Regional Block Grantees are required to:

- Demonstrate understanding of and respond to basic demographics, challenges, and needs unique to their region.
- Communicate RFFC Program objectives and any other pertinent information to partners.
- Document their regional outreach and engagement strategies and provide a transparent means for that documentation to be accessed by and shared with DOC, the Task Force, and the public.

DOC recognizes that many communities face real barriers towards meaningful engagement with government programs like the RFFC Program and that Regional Block Grantees may need to provide specific resources to help communities overcome these barriers. To ensure Regional Block Grantees are able to achieve the level of robust community engagement needed to accomplish core program goals, engagement events are considered eligible activities if the events, activities, and outcomes directly relate to and further grant objectives and:

- The community engagement activities encourage community members to uplift, reveal, or self-identify their needs,

- The purpose of the activity is to increase and/or sustain broad-based participation by affected community members, leaders, practitioners, and organizations, and
- The activities demonstrably mitigate a substantial barrier to effective participation.

Liaisons for Regional Efforts

Regional Block Grantees serve as the liaison between DOC and the geographies that they serve and are responsible for communicating key challenges, needs, accomplishments, and other pertinent information regarding RFFC Program goals from the region to DOC. In addition to leading outreach, engagement, and communication efforts within their region as indicated above, Regional Block Grantees must coordinate efforts among partners in their region, provide regional leadership, and facilitate communications and data-sharing with other regions, the Task Force, and statewide strategic efforts. To facilitate this work, Regional Block Grantees must:

- Maintain awareness of and/or participate in existing programs, partnerships, and other coordinating efforts within their geographies to avoid duplication of efforts.
- Participate in Task Force initiatives, including consultation on regional profiles and resources, collection of data, metrics, and communication materials needed for interagency regional collaboration.
- Support coordination and facilitate regional discussion among state and local entities through meetings, prioritization discussions, forums, or data inquiries.
- Provide for the stewardship of spatial, qualitative, and quantitative data produced or collected by the regional partnership, including data collection, maintenance, and communication.

Section 4: Coordinating Block Grant Activities

Coordinating Block Grantee Eligible Activities

Coordinating Block Grantees perform one or more of the following activities to meet the objectives outlined in Section 2: Block Grant Type, Eligibility, Selection, and Award and as relevant to address the identified need for the grant:

- Cross-regional and Statewide Coordination.
- Building and Sustaining Capacity at statewide and/or cross-regional scales.
- Demonstration Project Implementation with statewide and/or cross-regional implications.
- Outreach and Engagement to enhance deliverable applicability for statewide and/or cross-regional audiences.

Cross-regional and Statewide Coordination

Coordinating Block Grantees may coordinate between Regional Block Grantees to establish networks that mobilize resources, create more efficient implementation pathways, and/or develop opportunities for peer learning to meet regional and statewide wildfire resilience needs. Block Grantees will work with statewide partners to share lessons learned and pathways to success as they address cross-regional or statewide bottlenecks, gaps, or cross-cutting issues. Coordinating Block Grantees that are provided funding to support cross-regional or statewide coordination must harmonize their efforts with Regional Block Grantees and facilitate communications and data sharing with other regions, the Task Force, and statewide strategic efforts. Therefore, Coordinating Block Grantees may:

- Create convenings and provide opportunities for peer learning and networking.
- Maintain awareness of and/or participate in existing programs, partnerships, and other coordinating efforts across geographies to avoid duplication of efforts and to share and adapt strategies and approaches.
- Participate in DOC and Task Force initiatives, including consultation on shared strategies and Work Groups, policy development, collection of data, metrics, and communication materials needed for cross-regional collaboration.

Building and Sustaining Capacity

Coordinating Block Grantees may use a portion of their funds to build and sustain statewide capacity in a way that addresses gaps that would otherwise impede the state's ability to meet its wildfire resilience goals. Activities to build or sustain capacity must address gaps in the implementation of key actions and strategies of the Action Plan by increasing statewide or cross-regional partnership durability, upskilling and stabilizing workforces, increasing project development and implementation, and/or improving the ability of regions to share information.

Capacity building and sustaining efforts on a cross-regional and statewide scale may include:

- Upskilling and developing durable wildfire and forestry workforces through trainings, professional development, peer-learning, creating and staffing positions, and addressing employment challenges.

- Acquiring or utilizing tools and resources to increase cross-regional or statewide capacity for wildfire and landscape resilience projects planning and implementation.
- Developing new pilot projects and programs to address an identified gap or bottleneck that cannot be effectively addressed by existing Regional Block Grantees.
- When identified as a need by Regional Block Grantees, assisting Regional Block Grantees to complete essential program activities, including RPP implementation and maintenance.
- Providing or securing technical assistance at the statewide or cross-regional scale.
- Fellowships and/or stipends for individuals to participate in trainings and events that enhance capacity and further the objectives of the RFFC Program, who otherwise would not be able to participate, especially with regard to underrepresented individuals.

Coordinating Block Grantees must uphold the Program's collaborative framework and have a transparent, strategic process for decision making, and work with Regional Block Grantees to promote collaboration and avoid duplication of efforts wherever relevant.

Demonstration Project Implementation

Coordinating Block Grantees may use a portion of their funds to implement demonstration projects as described in Section 3: Regional Block Grant Activities and as aligned with supporting wildfire and landscape resilience efforts across regions and throughout the state. Demonstration projects must implement novel or underutilized techniques that can be scaled up or replicated and must address an issue that spans multiple regions. Coordinating Block Grantees must work with their grant manager to determine if a project is eligible for RFFC Program implementation funding as a demonstration project.

Outreach and Engagement

Coordinating Block Grantees may use a portion of the funds from this program to lead strategic outreach, engagement, coordination, and communication as necessary to develop materials, strategies, or deliverables that improve the statewide or cross-regional implementation of the program and meet the goals of the Action Plan. Coordinating Block Grantees may fill gaps in outreach, engagement, coordination, and communication between Block Grantees and related to their own deliverable development. To the extent applicable to their specific outreach and engagement activities, Coordinating Block Grantees must:

- Establish guiding principles or processes for their outreach and engagement to ensure Block Grant activities meet identified needs at the cross-regional and/or statewide scale. Grantees must regularly evaluate and adjust their outreach and engagement approaches based on outcomes and consider the social-ecological factors that affect wildfire vulnerability, including demographics, language and education access, and economic factors.
- Seek broad and diverse engagement from affected communities, tribes, and other organizations to inform grant deliverables such as plans, strategies and policies. Coordinating Block Grantees may need to involve fire and forestry

professionals, tribes and cultural practitioners, non-fire focused professionals such as environmental justice and public health officials, or other key decision-making groups.
- Incorporate methods of engagement that facilitate direct participation and eliminate barriers for communities and organizations to participate, such as activities described in Appendix D: Best Practices for Priority Population Engagement.

DOC recognizes that many communities face real barriers towards meaningful engagement with government programs like the RFFC Program. Coordinating Block Grantees are encouraged to help communities overcome these barriers by using program funding for community engagement costs, which can be found in Section 6: Eligible and Ineligible Costs. To ensure Coordinating Block Grantees are able to achieve the level of community engagement needed to create robust deliverables, engagement events are considered eligible activities if:

- The community engagement activities identify and meet the needs of the community.
- The purpose of the activity is to increase and/or sustain broad-based participation by affected community members, leaders, practitioners, and organizations.
- The activities demonstrably mitigate a substantial barrier to effective participation.
- The events, activities, and outcomes directly relate to and further grant objectives.

Coordinating Block Grantees conducting outreach and engagement activities must document their outreach and engagement strategy and must be prepared to provide a transparent means for that documentation to be accessed by or shared with DOC, the Task Force, and the public.

Section 5: Block Grant Administration

In addition to the specific activities required for Regional Block Grants (Section 3) and Coordinating Block Grants (Section 4), all Block Grantees are required to complete administrative activities to effectively manage and meet the expectations of their grant.

Administrative Activities

As part of their grant's administration, Block Grantees must:

- Participate in a grant and program orientation with DOC.
- Provide invoices and reports quarterly, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by DOC and Block Grantee.
- Fiscal management of subgrantees and subcontractors, including reviewing charges and paying invoices promptly.
- Participate in peer networking opportunities.
- Coordinate with local, regional, and/or state CAL FIRE and regional, state, and/or national Forest Service representatives.
- Ensure environmental compliance for all relevant projects and tasks.
- Report on deliverable and milestone execution and requirements within the grant term.

Reporting

Block Grantees will be responsible for meeting program-specific and bond-related reporting requirements.

Program-Specific Reporting

At a minimum, Block Grantees will be required to:

- Participate in an interview with DOC at key points in the grant term, including but not limited to grant agreement kick-off, mid-point, and close-out.
- Participate in monthly check-in meetings with DOC.
- Submit quarterly progress reports with data on key metrics determined in partnership with DOC.
- Provide project-specific highlights and success stories to DOC at key grant milestones identified collaboratively by DOC and the Block Grantee.
- Track key metrics for all subgrantees and include those metrics in quarterly reports to DOC.
- As relevant to the program of work, provide data about implementation projects, including objectives, treatment type, location, progress, and performance measures throughout the life of the project.
- If relevant to the program of work, compile and submit a leveraged funds report annually, at a minimum.
- Develop reports to share results and lessons learned from new pilot projects, programs, or Demonstration Project implementation, where applicable.
- Submit a final report at the end of the grant term.

These reporting requirements are intended to keep DOC regularly updated on progress, identify issues and necessary corrections in a timely fashion, and capture key metrics

and narratives that will help to communicate progress and elevate successes of the RFFC Program.

DOC will identify specific milestones or projects warranting additional reporting or communication efforts on a case-by-case basis and under DOC's sole discretion.

Climate Bond Reporting

The Climate Bond includes reporting requirements for all bond-funded activities. All Block Grantees receiving Climate Bond funding are required to fulfill these reporting requirements. In the instance where DOC partners with another state agency to administer the program, DOC and the state agency will determine statewide reporting responsibility during the Negotiated Award Consultation process. DOC and the partnering state agency will follow CNRA's best practices. Grant Managers will work with Block Grantees to gather the required information during grant initiation and throughout the grant term as needed.

Reporting requirements include:

- The location and footprint of each grant.
- The grant's objectives.
- The status of each grant.
- Anticipated grant outcomes.
- Public benefits related to the grant.
- Total cost of the grant and the amount of bond funding being used.
- The amount of match funds provided by the Block Grantee, if any.
- How projects relate to the goals of the Climate Bond.

Distribution of Block Grant Funds to Third Parties (Subgranting and Subcontracting)

Block Grantees may implement program activities directly, or provide subgrants or contracts to local entities, including municipal governments, tribes, nongovernmental organizations, community organizations, fire safe councils, land trusts, resource conservation districts, joint power authorities, special districts, fire departments, residents, private and public 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 their internal contracting or procurement policies and procedures.

Subcontractors provide goods or services ancillary to the Block Grantee's work plan and operate under the terms and conditions agreed upon in their executed contract, which must not conflict with the requirements of these Guidelines or the grant agreement. Subgrantees are considered sub-awardees of the RFFC Program's Block Grantee and must therefore abide by all requirements of these Guidelines and all applicable provisions of the grant agreement.

Block Grantees implementing subaward programs must uphold the flexibility, opportunities, and breadth of program activities as described in these guidelines, including providing funding for capacity building activities and creating opportunities that help achieve multiple program objectives and empower organizations to grow.

Regional Block Grantees must make DOC aware if they are unable to perform, carry out, or engage with any of the listed eligible activities during the Negotiated Award Consultation process. DOC will work collaboratively with the Regional Block Grantee to assess potential program gaps and determine how RFFC Program objectives will be reached. Subgrants, subcontracts, or Coordinating Block Grants may be utilized to achieve these in coordination with the Regional Block Grantee.

Subawards must be accessible to priority populations. DOC requires using the following guidance developed in partnership with natural resources organizations and tribes throughout the state to inform subaward program development:

- Making Funding Accessible to All
- Tribal Grant Administration Guidance
- Delivering a Successful Climate Bond: Requirements and Best Practices to Implement Prop 4

This includes offering flexible funding opportunities such as a two-phased application process; having tribal set-asides or funds specifically for tribes; providing technical assistance during application development; and removing barriers for tribes and other priority population access to funds.

Purchasing

Block Grantees are expected to adhere to their competitive bid, internal contracting, and purchasing guidelines. When considering reasonableness of costs associated with purchases, DOC supports partners weighing local economy, ecosystem integrity, organizational priorities, and other social ecological considerations in their decision-making. Documentation of the Block Grantee's contracting or purchasing guidelines, processes, and project-specific approvals may be requested in the event of an audit by the State.

Fiscal Management

Block Grantees must demonstrate strong fiscal management practices and maintain administrative infrastructure to successfully support subgrantees/subcontractors. Block Grantees must seek to understand and anticipate their region's financial needs to avoid cashflow issues. At a minimum, Block Grantees must:

- Distribute and manage funds equitably, in a transparent process, through subgrants and/or contracts as appropriate.
- Forecast costs based on cashflow needs within the organization and funding-dependent partners, such as subawardees and contractors.
- Encumber and spend funds effectively, efficiently, and strategically.
- Adopt fiscal practices that pay subgrantees/subcontractors in a timely manner, either through reimbursement or advance pay.
- Track and monitor funding to ensure funds are used according to RFFC Program guidelines and the grant agreement.
- Maintain audit-ready documentation of expenses throughout the grant term and during the four-year retention period.

Payment Provisions

DOC offers reimbursement and/or advance payment options for work under approved workplans. Eligible Block Grantees may use reimbursement and/or advance pay as aligned with Government Code 11019.3, funding sources, and CNRA best practices. In the event DOC provides Climate Bond funding to a state agency to implement the program, DOC and the state agency may use the provisions in AB 109 (Gabriel, Stat. 2026, ch. 19) sec. 15.04 to transfer funds. DOC and the funding recipient state agency will negotiate budgetary reporting during the Negotiated Award Consultation process.

All payment requests and advance payment reporting must follow DOC's invoice and reporting templates, provide complete and organized supporting documentation sufficient to justify the costs billed, and include only eligible costs as described in these guidelines and the Block Grantee's approved workplan and budget. Payment requests may be rejected and returned for correction at the discretion of the Grant Manager in accordance with the invoice dispute process in the grant agreement, including due to incomplete supporting documentation, inclusion of ineligible costs, and/or inclusion of a request for payment for activities not applicable to the workplan.

Only those eligible costs incurred as outlined in these guidelines, within the grant term, and in accordance with the grant agreement will be eligible for reimbursement or advance pay. Funds cannot be disbursed until the grant agreement has been executed by both DOC and the Block Grantee.

Reimbursements

All Block Grantees can submit reimbursement requests. Block Grantees must submit reimbursement invoices quarterly, or more frequently as agreed upon in writing by both DOC and the Block Grantee.

Supporting documentation must use the cost categories supplied by DOC and, where relevant, use the templates provided by DOC. Supporting documentation may include receipts, invoices, mileage logs, and summary time sheets clearly demonstrating how funds were spent.

Advance Payments

Advance payments are intended to allow Block Grantees to initiate the grant project in a timely manner and assist with short-term cashflow shortfalls while ensuring proper management and expenditure of state funds. DOC may authorize advance payments of up to 25% of the grant award at a time to eligible Block Grantees under the following conditions:

- Block Grantees eligible for advance pay must deposit advance pay funds in a federally insured, interest-bearing account that can track withdrawals and interest accrued. This account should be in the Block Grantee entity's name and be able to track advance pay funds from this program separately from any other funding. Interest earned must be applied to eligible activities described in the approved workplan and be spent before the end of the grant term or returned to DOC at the end of the grant term.
- Prior to receiving an advance payment, Block Grantees must establish procedures to minimize the amount of time that elapses between the transfer of

funds and the expenditure of those funds by the Block Grantee or subgrantee or contractor.

- State agencies will only be eligible to receive advance pay on a case-by-case basis with approval from the Department Director and CNRA, and subject to any additional requirements stipulated by CNRA or the State Treasurer's Office.
- Further advance payments up to 25% may be approved for Block Grantees with an updated budget projection that establishes a specific cash need requiring additional funds within 90 days.
- If a subsequent advance request would result in more than 25% of the total grant award being advanced over the life of the grant, the Block Grantee must submit an additional justification detailing why advances over 25% are necessary to effectively achieve the objectives of the Block Grant. Advances beyond the 25%-limit will be allowed at DOC's sole discretion, with Program Manager approval, and based on staff's determination that further advances will improve programmatic outcomes over alternative disbursement methods, for example by enhancing the grantees' ability to build and sustain capacity or successfully increase pace and scale to meet the goals of the Action Plan.
- Advances may be made by a Block Grantee to subgrantees or subcontractors in accordance with the Block Grantee's accounting and payment procedures. The Block Grantee is responsible for the subgrantee and subcontractor's compliance with state laws and these guidelines.
- Block Grantees who have accepted an advance payment cannot submit a reimbursement request until advance funds are spent. If advanced funds are fully expended during a quarter when additional costs are incurred, Block Grantees may submit a combined Fiscal Report and reimbursement request.

DOC may apply other conditions or requirements as necessary to ensure compliance with Government Code 11019.3, funding sources, CNRA best practices, and other statutes governing advance pay practices.

Eligibility

Organizations eligible for advance pay must exhibit strong fiscal management/controls and be in good standing with DOC, the Internal Revenue Service, and the California Franchise Tax Board, and be a certified non-profit, tribe, tribal non-profit, or local public agency, including local governments and resource conservation districts. With the appropriate justification, and following a process approved by CNRA, all other eligible, state-related Block Grantees, including state agencies and joint powers authorities, may be eligible for advance payment on a case-by-case basis.

Federally recognized tribes will need to sign a Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity in order to receive an advance payment. DOC will consult with the federally recognized tribe as needed to define the scope of the required limited waiver. This requirement may be modified in the future to comply with updated CNRA guidance at the time the advance payment is requested.

Documentation

An advance pay request must include a narrative describing what the Block Grantee anticipates using the advance pay funds for, an itemized budget projection, a spending timeline, and documentation demonstrating good standing with the Internal

Revenue Service if the organization is exempt from taxation. Tribes do not need to provide documentation demonstrating good standing. Anticipated activities and costs must align with the workplan and budget in the grant agreement.

DOC will work closely with Block Grantees to ensure compliance with these terms whenever an advance payment has been requested, approved, and liquidated. Requests for additional documentation as part of the fiscal reports or otherwise must be promptly complied with to ensure that funds are being spent on approved items and have sufficient supporting documentation.

Quarterly Fiscal Reporting

Block Grantees that receive an advance payment must submit quarterly fiscal reports describing actual expenditures of advanced funds, including submitting receipts, paid invoices, and other sufficient supporting documentation to stay in good standing with the program.

For funds advanced following the Advance Payment section above, if actual expenditures vary from the approved advance pay request's itemized budget, the Block Grantee must notify DOC as soon as possible and before funds are expended for grant manager approval. The quarterly fiscal report must include an updated budget projection and narrative that addresses the variance. After the advance pay is fully spent, Block Grantees must provide a progress report detailing how funds were spent. This can be fulfilled by the final quarterly Fiscal Report.

Failure to meet fiscal reporting requirements or to comply with the RFFC Program's eligible costs requirements in their spending may make the Block Grantee ineligible for future advances or require DOC to take other corrective action.

Accounting and Auditing of Funds

All expenditures of public funds under this program are subject to audit by the State of California.

Noncompliance and Corrective Actions

If the Block Grantee does not comply with these guidelines or uphold statutory mandates related to the program, or if DOC identifies other grant performance issues that impede the Block Grantee's ability to meet the goals of the program under the terms of their grant in DOC's sole discretion, DOC will take progressive corrective action in order to limit risks to state funds and preserve the viability of the grant project. Corrective action will be pursued as follows:

1. Informal written notice to Block Grantee identifying the concern and requesting prompt correction.
2. Meeting with Block Grantee staff, formal corrective action notice to Block Grantee, establishment of a timeline for correction, and regular check-ins to ensure corrective actions are being taken in accordance with said timeline.
3. Meeting with Block Grantee's organizational leadership to discuss failure to comply with formal corrective action and/or timeline, and advisement of next step if timely compliance not achieved.
4. Termination of the grant agreement.

DOC seeks to work with Block Grantees to resolve any noncompliance concerns at the earliest possible stage. However, depending on the severity of the noncompliance and the risk to state funds, DOC may skip progressive corrective action steps and take the action it deems necessary to halt further Block Grantee spending and recover any advanced or reimbursed funds.

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 must ensure grant agreement budgets include the funding necessary for compliance-related tasks.

Block Grantees requesting to use RFFC Program funding to fund implementation projects must submit the relevant environmental documentation demonstrating adequate compliance with applicable environmental laws prior to release of funding. DOC will verify completion of the environmental documents before releasing funding for implementation projects but is not responsible for approving such documents. For more information on implementation project acceptance, see the section on implementation project approval.

Where relevant, projects must include meaningful consultation with applicable tribes as required by statute to ensure that parties involved in an implementation project can identify and address potential adverse impacts to tribal cultural resources in the early planning stages of the project.

Prevailing Wage

Activities funded through the RFFC Program may be public works projects pursuant to Labor Code section 1720 and may be subject to prevailing wage provisions of the Labor Code commencing with section 1770. Any questions of interpretation regarding the Labor Code should be directed to the Director of the Department of Industrial Relations, the state department having jurisdiction in these matters. For more details, please refer to the Department of Industrial Relations website.

Section 6: Eligible and Ineligible Costs

Eligible Costs

All eligible costs must be incurred during the grant agreement term. For costs defined below to be eligible for reimbursement, those costs must be for activities identified in the workplan and that directly contribute to the intended goals and outcomes of the RFFC Program. Additionally, all costs must be reasonable, as defined in Section 7: Definitions and Reference Material. Types of eligible costs and general definitions can be found in the table below.

RFFC Cost Categories Summary Table		
Category	**Definition**	**Examples**
Personnel Costs	Direct costs related to the operations, support, and development of an organization's team members, including salary costs, benefits, and professional trainings. Worker's compensation may be considered a direct personnel cost along with employee benefits.	Salaries for Block Grantee staff; training fees associated with professional development of Block Grantee staff; stipends paid at routine intervals to cover specific expenses (*i.e.*, monthly telework stipends).
Travel	Actual, necessary, and appropriate business and travel expenses incurred during travel lasting 12 hours or more. Costs and selected travel methods are subject to all applicable RFFC Program policies.	Lodging (hotel, short-term rental, hostel, public campgrounds, and similar lodging open to the public), mileage, rental cars, train or airfare, parking fees, tolls, meals and incidentals.
Outreach & Engagement Expenses	All costs, aside from staff time, that are related to outreach and engagement efforts. This includes public-facing and practitioner-facing engagement. When relevant, this category supersedes both Supplies and Materials and Contractors.	Pamphlet printing; signage; venue rentals; food or childcare services purchased to increase access to an outreach event.
Supplies & Materials	All expenses related to the purchase of any materials or supplies with a unit value below the federally defined "Equipment" threshold for that fiscal year (currently $10,000), when those materials and supplies are used for grant-related activities.	Office supplies (computers, desks, chairs, etc.), software, databases, field supplies (string trimmers, drip torches, personal protective equipment, fuel for small equipment being used at a project site).

Equipment	Costs related to the purchase of any capitalized asset with a determined unit or system value at or above the threshold set by Code of Federal Regulations for that fiscal year (currently $10,000). Equipment must meaningfully increase the Block Grantee's capacity to perform the tasks outlined in the grant agreement.	Vehicles, masticators, enterprise software, fencing, trailers, or electronics to support a prescribed grazing operation.
Contractors	Payments to an individual or entity under a procurement contract with Block Grantee to perform specific work or provide supplies. Includes consultants with contracts to provide project-specific oversight or other forms of support as well as other forms of contractors.	Landscape contractor for an implementation project; Consultant working on RPP development; Environmental permitting contractors; HR consultant providing insight on hiring practices; trainer hired to upskill staff; legal services.
Miscellaneous Operating Costs	Other operating costs that do not fit in any of the above categories. Costs must be directly related to and required for the successful execution of grant tasks. Costs in this category should be discussed with and approved by the Grant Manager before they are incurred to ensure eligibility.	Application fees for various local and state permits; Costs of operating equipment owned by the Block Grantee; Costs for transporting equipment to and from a project site for routine maintenance/monitoring.
Subawards (direct costs)	Direct costs incurred by subgrantees will be billed by Block Grantees under this category. Subgrantees may incur and be reimbursed by their Block Grantee for various direct costs that fall under the other defined cost categories, but Block Grantees shall report all subgrantee direct costs under this category.	Salary costs of subgrantee employees working on RFFC tasks; equipment and supplies purchased by subgrantees for RFFC tasks; travel costs of subgrantees for RFFC events; contractors hired by subgrantees.
Subawards (indirect costs)	All indirect costs incurred by subgrantees and billed to their RFFC Program subgrant within each reporting period.	All of the above types of indirect expenses incurred by subgrantees.
Block Grantee Indirect Costs	Costs incurred by an organization that are necessary for its overall operations but are not readily identifiable with a particular grant or program. Commonly referred to as administrative costs. Indirect Costs shall not exceed either (1) 25% of the total grant budget, or (2) 35% with an approved NICRA, inclusive of Grantee and subgrantee indirect costs.	Basic office supplies used to support multiple programs; utilities for office space; management oversight; insurance; ongoing operation & maintenance costs of office equipment.

Additional details for specific cost categories can be found below.

Travel Costs

In-state travel costs may be reimbursed for Block Grantees, subgrantees, and contractors as necessary to fulfill the deliverables of the program. In accordance with

CalHR policy, reimbursement shall be for actual, necessary, and appropriate business and travel expenses incurred during travel lasting 12 hours or more. In instances where travel lasts less than 12 hours but attendance is required by DOC, travel expenses may be covered. Receipts must be submitted for any lodging, transportation, meals and/or incidentals reimbursement requests over $100.

- **Lodging** (hotel, short-term rental, hostel, public campground, and similar lodging open to the public): maximum reimbursement rates based on county and month of travel as shown in *Section 2203 - Allowances and Travel Reimbursements* of CalHR's Manual, which may be updated from time to time.
    - If lodging within a reasonable distance of the destination is not available at or below the maximum reimbursement rates listed above, an "Excess Lodging Rate" of no more than $350 per night may be granted with prior written approval from DOC. Any rates approved must still be reasonable, as defined in Section 7: Definitions and Reference Material. An "Excess Lodging Rate" will not be considered without submittal of three "good faith" comparison quotes for the requested travel dates and a written justification for the requested lodging rate.
- **Mileage:** For travel directly related to execution of the workplan, mileage will be reimbursed at the *Reimbursement Rate Per Mile for Personal Vehicle* as shown on *Section 2202 - Mileage Reimbursement* of CalHR's Manual, which may be updated from time to time.
    - All mileage reimbursement requests must include back-up documentation, such as mileage log or similar.
- **Transportation:** Rental car, train, or airfare expenses will only be reimbursed if it is the reasonable method used to get from one location to the other.
- **Meals:** Actual meal and incidental expenses incurred during travel will be reimbursed in accordance with the maximum rates and time frame requirements outlined in *Section 2203 - Allowances and Travel Reimbursements* of CalHR's Manual, which may be updated from time to time.
- **Out-of-State Travel:** No reimbursement for out-of-state travel will be allowed, except in instances where out-of-state travel provides the most efficient, reasonable, and cost-effective method of completing in-state travel, and where such out-of-state travel is approved in writing by DOC prior to expenses being incurred.

Outreach & Engagement Expenses

Public-facing and practitioner-facing engagement are core components of the RFFC Program. To ensure that Block Grantees are able to meet the needs of the communities they serve, some costs are made eligible because they are necessary for program-related engagement efforts.

Outreach and engagement expenses are eligible for reimbursement if the engagement event that the cost supports is an eligible activity per Section 3: Regional Block Grant Activities and Section 4: Coordinating Block Grant Activities. Outreach and engagement expense eligibility should be reviewed with RFFC Program staff prior to incurring costs. If the activity is determined to be eligible, all expenses related to that activity must be billed to this category. This includes expenses that would typically be billed to other categories if used for another purpose. For example, hiring a contractor

to provide interpretation services at a public meeting should be billed under this category and not under Contractor Costs.

Supplies & Material Costs

Supplies and materials purchased directly by the Block Grantee must be accounted for in this category. Supplies purchased by contractors or subgrantees must be charged to their respective cost categories. Items that might be called equipment, but are under $10,000, are considered supplies or materials.

Equipment Costs

Any eligible equipment purchased with RFFC Program funding must list the Block Grantee, subgrantee, or subcontractor—as applicable and with DOC approval—as the sole owner on title. During the grant term, the equipment must be dedicated to uses proportionate to and consistent within the scope of the grant agreement. Block Grantees must seek written approval from DOC before purchasing equipment or capital assets.

For the duration of the useful life of the grant-funded equipment, the Block Grantee, subgrantee or subcontractor must have a process for tracking capital asset depreciation and maintain a record identifying the following:

1. Each grant-funded equipment.
2. The expected useful life of each item.
3. The ultimate disposition (disposal or donation).

Block Grantees shall utilize an established process for the management and tracking of capital asset depreciation (such as equipment costs to fulfill equipment tracking requirements.

Federally recognized tribes who plan to purchase capital assets, but do not have a tracking process in place and are not interested in using program funds to develop a process, may need to sign a limited waiver of sovereign immunity prior to purchasing the capital asset. The federally recognized tribe and DOC will confer and determine if a limited waiver of sovereign immunity is needed before purchasing the capital asset.

Contractor Costs

Contractor costs will be paid on the basis of the billing rates and terms agreed upon in the executed contract. Contractor costs should not be broken out into other cost categories. Added costs, such as contractor indirect costs, that are not stipulated in the executed contract are ineligible for payment.

Block Grantee Indirect Costs

Reimbursement for indirect costs associated with the Block Grant will be made at an Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) identified using one of the methods outlined in Appendix B: Indirect Cost Rates or using itemized real costs per invoice, as requested by the Block Grantee.

Where the Block Grantee requests to use itemized real costs to calculate their indirect costs for the Block Grant, each invoice must track and directly bill itemized indirect costs to the grant and must include the appropriate supporting documentation, such as receipts, when the invoice is submitted to DOC for payment.

Where the Block Grantee requests to use an indirect cost rate, this rate will be applied to a specified portion of applicable direct costs, known as the Indirect Cost Basis (ICB), to determine the total amount of the Block Grant budget allocated to indirect costs.

The maximum reimbursement by the RFFC Program for indirect costs, inclusive of Block Grantee and subawardee indirect costs, cannot exceed either (1) twenty-five (25%) of the total Block Grant award for entities without an active Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), or (2) thirty-five percent (35%) of the total Block Grant award for entities with a current federally approved NICRA.

All indirect costs must:

- Represent actual costs incurred.
- Not be reimbursable as staff costs.
- Be budgeted separately and comply with the requirements outlined in these guidelines.
- Be costs not billed as a direct cost.
- Not be applied to procurement contractors or capital assets, including equipment.

It is the responsibility of the Block Grantee to keep documentation used to determine their indirect cost rate or itemized real costs and provide detailed calculations in support of that rate.

Block Grantees must manage the total amount of their grant available for indirect costs in an equitable way to ensure subaward indirect costs are covered to the extent feasible and in alignment with these guidelines. This may include forecasting indirect cost needs for subawardees, allowing all four indirect cost rate options as described in these guidelines, and following CNRA's best practices for indirect cost rates.

Additional information on indirect costs, including a list of methods for claiming indirect cost rates and acceptable indirect cost rate supporting documentation can be found in Appendix B: Indirect Cost Rates.

Subawards (indirect costs)

All subaward indirect costs must represent actual costs incurred. Subawardees may request repayment of indirect costs using either an Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) identified using one of the methods outlined in Appendix B: Indirect Cost Rates or using itemized real costs per invoice.

If a subawardee requests to use itemized real costs to calculate their indirect costs for their grant or contract, each invoice must track and directly bill itemized indirect costs to the agreement and must include the appropriate supporting documentation, such as receipts, when the invoice is submitted to DOC for payment.

Ineligible Costs

Ineligible costs are:

- Activities performed, equipment or vehicles purchased, and all other costs not consistent with the budget and workplan, not approved by DOC prior to purchase, or not related to RFFC Program objectives.
- Services, materials, or equipment obtained under any other program than RFFC.

- Costs strictly used for wildfire response unless also utilized for wildfire preparedness activities and approved by the Department in writing ahead of time.
- Costs that occur outside of the grant agreement term.
- Alcoholic beverages.
- Incentive/participation gifts, such as door prizes.
- Out-of-state travel, except when such travel is the most efficient, reasonable, and cost-effective method of travel for in-state travel purposes, and Grant Manager has pre-approved of its use.
- Routine travel between an office or home located out-of-state and RFFC Program activities or events located within California.
- Legal costs and attorney fees associated with making or defending legal claims.
- Costs used to implement any environmental mitigation requirements or compliance obligations imposed by law and arising from unrelated activities or preexisting violations.
- Interest expenses based on loans.
- Lobbying.
- Entertainment.
- Real estate brokerage fees and/or expenses.
- Real property acquisition and/or easements.
- The following costs associated with community engagement and outreach, in addition to those listed above:
    - Direct cash benefits or subsidies to participants, such as cash subsidies to secure private transportation services.
    - General meetings that do not specifically discuss or advance RFFC Program activities and objectives.
    - Food for tabling events, internal meetings or workshops where the primary audience is full-time paid employees, established partners, or those already engaged with the event topic, subject matter, and goals, such as a meeting between an existing collaborative. An exception is food for trainings or workshops where the primary audience may be paid employees but may not be full-time employees, are part of priority populations, and/or whose ability to participate may be restricted if food is not provided.
    - Sponsorships for events or organizations where expenses cannot be directly tied to eligible program costs.

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 reporting documentation within the time periods specified in the grant agreement.
- Change in project scope, schedule, or budget without prior approval.

- Failure to complete the program of work.
- Failure to achieve specific milestones identified in workplan or in coordination with DOC.
- 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 7: Definitions and Reference Material

Definitions

Block Grant: A grant that funds a program of work designed to accomplish broad project objectives that meet state climate goals while enhancing regional autonomy.

California Native American Tribe: A federally recognized California Native American tribe, or a non-federally recognized California Native American tribe listed on the California Tribal Consultation List maintained by the Native American Heritage Commission. The use of "tribe" and "tribal," and "tribal community" throughout these guidelines, unless otherwise stated, specifically refers to California Native American tribes as provided for in this definition.

California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Task Force: Established in 2018, the Task Force is a collaborative effort to align the activities of federal, state, local, public, private and tribal organizations to support programs and projects tailored to the unique priorities and risks of the Central Coast, Northern, Sierra, and Southern California regions.

Capital Asset: A tangible asset used in operations having a useful life of more than one year, which is capitalized in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. Capital assets include equipment and other capital expenditures such as any amount paid for permanent improvements that increases the value of the property or estate, as defined by 26 CFR § 1108.75 and § 1.263(a)-1.

Collaboration or Collaborative: Multiple and diverse stakeholders (including agencies, as appropriate and tribes) seeking to improve natural resource conditions and the socio-ecological resilience of communities 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.

Demonstration Project: A type of implementation project that applies new, innovative, and/or underutilized techniques, technology, or approaches, which can be scaled up and/or replicated beyond the demonstration project. Demonstration projects must include outreach and evaluation components to allow for grantees to track and share results with other regions and practitioners.

Federally Recognized California Native American Tribe: A California sovereign political entity recognized by and eligible for services by the federal government pursuant to the annual list published under the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (25 U.S.C. Sec. 5131) in the Federal Register.

Implementation Project: A tangible project that has ground-disturbing, direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect impact on the environment, and that reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfire, improves a landscape or community's resilience to fire, and/or increases the pace of ecosystem recovery post-fire. Includes both Demonstration Projects and Portfolio Implementation Projects.

***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 should be delineable based on defensible geographic characteristics (*e.g.*, watershed boundaries or Potential Operational Delineations).

Leveraged Funds: Additional funds secured as a result of the RFFC Program, or that could not have been secured without RFFC Program investments (e.g., grants secured by RFFC Program-funded staff, funding for projects planned with RFFC Program support, etc.).

Meaningful and Direct Benefits: The project's benefits are considered meaningful and direct to a priority population if the following four criteria are met and verified:

1. Ensures the creation of direct, tangible, and substantial benefits to individuals of the priority population that would not have materialized without its implementation. The benefits are not incidental, indirect, or speculative, and can be articulated.
    a. Direct: A causal link between project activities and realized benefits to residents of a priority population is demonstrated.
    b. Tangible: A specific project that clearly affects a discrete priority population.
    c. Substantial: The benefits are reasonably proportional to the scale of the project being undertaken. A project where most of the claimed benefits accrue to other parties would be incidental, not substantial, or disproportionately small. In the context of determining whether benefits are reasonably proportional to the scale of the project, a variety of indicators can be used, including dollars, households retrofitted, individuals engaged, acres treated, and field activities.
2. Protects or enhances a priority population's resources and quality of life by protecting or improving landscape health and wildfire resilience through any one or more of the following:
    a. Helping regions build wildfire management capacity, such as creating local wildfire jobs programs, or supporting tribal stewardship.
    b. Reducing risks to the community or population from wildfire hazard.
    c. Protecting resources threatened by climate change (*e.g.*, drinking water supply/quality, urban tree canopy, critical infrastructure hardening).
    d. Creating or enhancing community or population assets (*e.g.*, wetlands, resilience centers).
3. Directly responds to the priority population's expressed need or desired benefit, either through direct project input or as part of a larger planning or engagement

effort. The project is inherently designed to meet needs that have been identified by the priority population and that project scoping, development, and implementation integrated priority population input to the maximum extent feasible.

4. Does not result in a long-term degradation or reduction of any priority populations' resources identified in (2). Benefits should not be provided to one community or population at the expense of or burdening another—harms should be avoided and minimized. If the project has the potential to reduce or degrade community resources, then predefined mechanisms or commitments for remediation are in place to avoid these harms.

Multiple Benefit or Multi-Benefit: A quality of Regional Priority Plans, projects, or programs of work with multiple benefits to describe that those multiple benefits are meaningfully and thoughtfully designed to maximize their general benefit and thus provide other benefits in addition to wildfire resilience, including community and economic benefits, ecosystem health and biodiversity, renewable energy, or climate benefits.

Partner(s): Organizations and entities representing different interests who play a role in a Regional Partnership. All RFFC Program subgrantees are considered partners, but not all partners are required to be subgrantees.

Portfolio Implementation Project: A type of implementation project that is identified through an RPP or equivalent tribal approach and aligns with the goals set forth by the Climate Bond, the Action Plan, and the RFFC Program.

Priority Populations: Populations exposed to high fire hazard and most burdened by environmental, socioeconomic, and/or health inequities. Includes disadvantaged communities, severely disadvantaged communities, and vulnerable populations. More information about each of these terms is available in Appendix C: Meaningful and Direct Benefits to Priority Populations and Communities.

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 or entities concerned acted with prudence in the circumstances considering their responsibilities to their 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 Partnerships: A large-scale collaboration operating with the common goal to elevate, integrate, and expand regional wildfire and landscape 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 Priority Plan*:** A planning framework that identifies, evaluates, coordinates, prioritizes, and advances landscape and community fire resilience projects and initiatives. Regional Priority Plans (RPPs) must include an assessment of unique social and ecological characteristics of a region, key decision-making structures, engagement from interested parties, a framework for decision-making, and a list of planned and active projects that will advance a region's wildfire, landscape, and community resilience goals. The RFFC Program may recognize equivalent planning frameworks developed through other programs as RPPs.

***Regional Profiles*:** Publicly available resource included in the regional resource kits developed by the Task Force's Science Advisory Panel in 2022. Regional Profiles summarize the socio-ecological context of the region (including vegetation types and distribution, forest management and disturbance history and future projected climatic changes), a current condition assessment, and findings from interviews and surveys about regional stakeholder priorities and concerns for community and ecosystem resilience.

Regional Resource Kits: Sets of key information, mapped data, and resource assessments intended to support the acceleration of regional planning to reduce wildfire hazard and improve landscape resilience. The kits will include core metrics, a non-technical description of desired resilience outcomes, an assessment of current conditions in the region, core operational data layers, and identification of treatment opportunities.

***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 area draining to any point in a stream.

Wildfire and Landscape Resilience: For the purposes of the RFFC Program, wildfire and landscape resilience refers to the social and ecological resilience of communities, resources, and fire-prone landscapes influenced by wildfire and related disturbances exacerbated by climate change.

Reference Materials

Climate Bond Resources

- California Natural Resources Agency Prop 4 Climate Bond website
- Proposition 4 Bond Language, July 2024
- Delivering a Successful Climate Bond: Requirements & Best Practices to Implement Proposition 4, October 2025, California Natural Resources Agency
- Meaningful and Direct Benefits Assessment: 2024 Climate Bond, California Natural Resources Agency
- Climate Benefits Guide, September 2025, California Natural Resources Agency

Tribal Consultation and Additional Resources

- Tribal Grant Administration Guidance, September 2025, California Natural Resources Agency

- Tribal Consultation Policy, Best Practices, and Resources, California Natural Resources Agency
    - CNRA Tribal Consultation Policy
    - Appendix 1 – Definitions
    - Appendix 2 – Tribal Consultation Best Practices
    - Appendix 3 – Cultural Humility
- DOC's Tribal Consultation & Engagement Policy

Task Force Resources

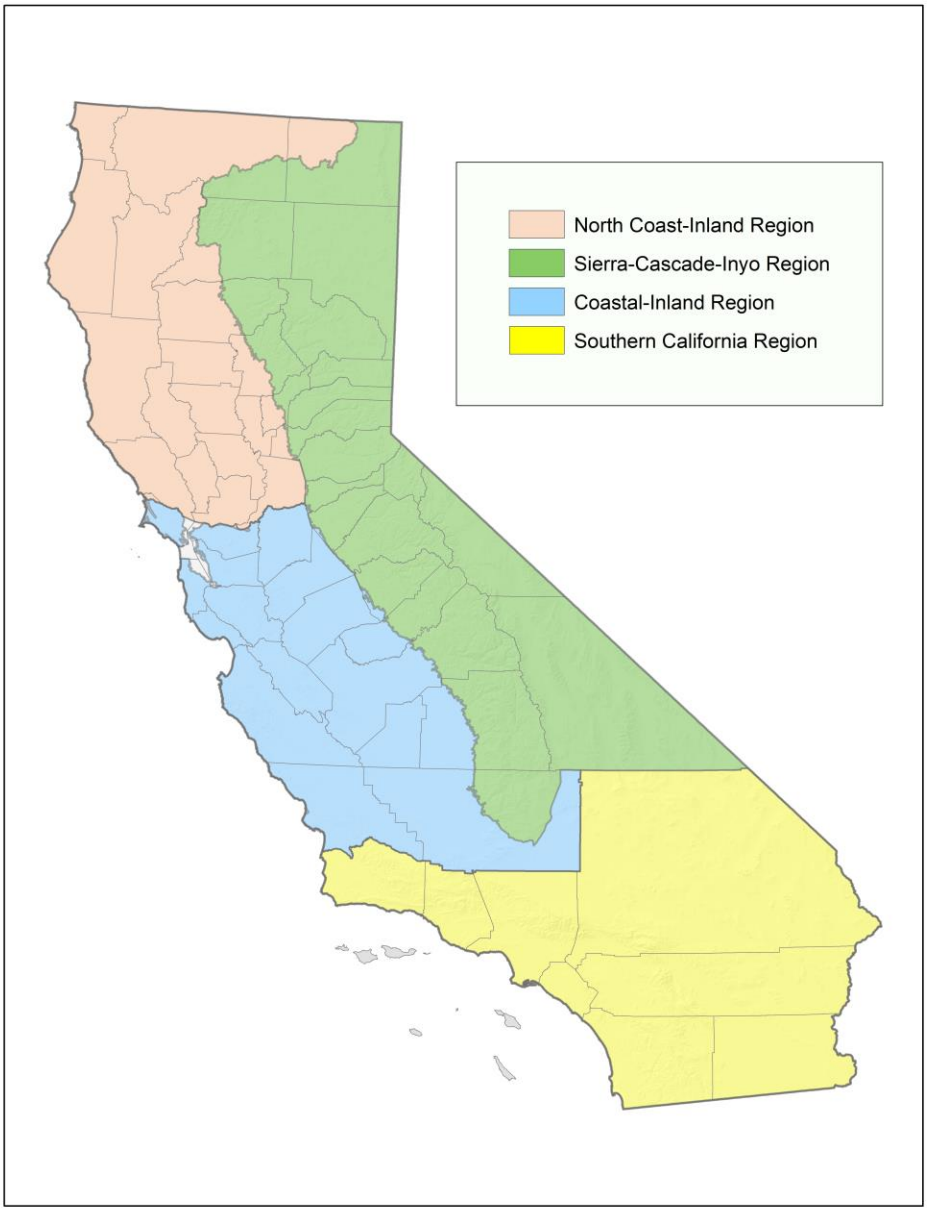
- California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan, 2026 Update **Placeholder**
- California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan, January 2021, California Forest Management Task Force

Other Resources

- Agreement for Shared Stewardship of California's Forests and Rangelands, August 2020
- Framework for Promoting Socio-ecological Resilience Across Forested Landscapes in the Sierra Nevada, August 2020, Tahoe-Central Sierra Initiative
- Executive Order B-52-18, May 2018

Appendix A: Regions Map

The following map is a general representation of the four geographic areas that guide program funding allocations. Specific Regional Block Grantee jurisdictions within these areas are defined by the Regional Block Grantees and their partners. In addition to the Regional Map below, the Program will use maps generated through the Task Force Action Plan to further investment strategies, coordination, reporting, and state wildfire resilience goals as needed and described in that plan.



Appendix B: Indirect Cost Rates

Terminology

Indirect Costs: Reimbursable costs incurred by an organization that are necessary for its overall operations (*e.g.*, office rent, computers, telephones, office supplies, internet access, copy machines, electricity) but are not readily tied to an individual project or program. For the purpose of the RFFC Program, the use of the terms "indirect costs" and "administrative costs" are interchangeable.

Indirect Cost Rate (ICR): A ratio used to calculate indirect costs as a percentage of the total direct costs associated with the grant or project(s). This percentage is used to recover expenses that are necessary for an organization's general operations but cannot be easily or specifically tied to a single project or grant.

Indirect Cost Basis (ICB): The specific proportion of an organization's direct costs to which an indirect cost rate is applied to determine the allowable amount of indirect costs (overhead) the grant will cover.

Modified Total Direct Cost: A specific type of Indirect Cost Basis defined by the Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) § 200.1. At time of writing, MTDC means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first $50,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs, and the portion of each subaward in excess of $50,000. Other items may only be excluded when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs. Refer to the Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) for the most current definition.

Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA): A published document that reflects an approved indirect cost rate negotiated between the federal government and a Block Grantee's or subgrantee's organization that includes indirect costs (facilities and administrative costs) incurred by the organization but not assigned to one specific task or project. To obtain a NICRA, an organization provides a cost allocation plan to the federal agency from which they receive the most funding (their cognizant agency).

General Principles

Separable: All indirect costs must be separable from direct costs.

Real Costs: All indirect costs must be actual, incurred costs. For example, if an organization is billing 15% in indirect costs, all those funds need to be paying for indirect costs, and not for any other costs that are ineligible or unrelated to the RFFC Program. In the event of an audit, Block Grantees or subgrantees will need to be able to demonstrate that reported indirect costs were real incurred expenses.

Maximums: The sum of all indirect costs from all parties must not exceed 25% of the total Block Grant budget unless an alternative maximum is approved by the Department Director at the time of award. Block Grantees and subgrantees should divide the total administrative budget to most effectively support the needs of all parties.

Audits: Indirect costs are to be spent on real costs. In an audit, Block Grantees will need to show that any administrative costs were spent on real costs by providing documentation, in accordance with the Audit section of the grant agreement between the Block Grantee and DOC.

Methods for Identifying an Indirect Cost Rate

As requested by the Block Grantee, the indirect cost rate for a Block Grantee or subgrantee will be determined using one of the following rates (PRC § 90133):

- ***Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)****:* Block Grantees or subgrantees with an existing, federally approved NICRA can use that rate, which is an established percentage for indirect cost reimbursement. DOC will honor whatever terms were established by the cognizant agency except that capital assets shall be excluded from the cost basis, if applicable. Regardless of the terms of the NICRA, Block Grantees will be responsible for tracking admin costs to ensure they do not exceed 35% of their award as stated in Section 6: Eligible and Ineligible Costs.
- ***Federal De Minimis Rate****:* Block Grantees or subgrantees that do not have a NICRA may be eligible to use a fixed rate of up to 15% of the grant's Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC), also known as a *de minimis* indirect cost rate, as specified in the Code of Federal Regulations § 200.414(f).
- ***Indirect Cost Rate with Another State Agency:*** *Block* Grantees or subgrantees may use a rate negotiated and formally accepted by another state agency in the last five years, such as the implementing MOU for the AB20 model agreement between the Department of General Services and the University of California and California State University systems.
- ***Proposed Indirect Cost Rate:*** A rate proposed by the Block Grantee or subgrantee in their application to DOC or the Block Grantee, as relevant, if the Block Grantee or subgrantee does not have an existing state rate.

DOC encourages potential Block Grantees to discuss their proposed method and rate early in the application process.

Supporting Documentation for Indirect Cost Rates

Block Grantees and subgrantees must provide one-time supporting documentation for indirect costs, which will be retained as part of grant files. If indirect costs change, the Block Grantee is responsible for providing updated supporting documentation before the next quarterly reporting period.

Block Grantees and subgrantees claiming indirect costs based on NICRA must submit a current, valid NICRA which stipulates the approved rate, cost basis, and term of the agreement. Block Grantees and subgrantees claiming a rate approved by another State Agency must submit the governing agreement or MOU which establishes the rate and the terms under which it is to be used. Block Grantees and subgrantees proposing an alternative indirect cost rate must provide one or a combination of the following forms of acceptable supporting documentation:

- ***Cost Allocation Plan:*** This would include direct and indirect operating costs of the organization and would describe how the organization pays all of those costs,

including but not limited to staff time, rent, internet, phones, basic operating costs, and trainings. Please note that creating a cost allocation plan can be a time- and cost-intensive process and is not necessary for the RFFC Program.

- ***Cost Justification:*** This is a crosswalk of the claimed indirect cost rate to real costs. Cost justification documentation could be narrative or tabular, and at a minimum it should explain what the indirect cost rate is, how the indirect rate was determined, and what costs the rate will be applied to (the Indirect Cost Basis).
- ***Expired or Provisional NICRA:*** A Provisional NICRA is a temporary form of NICRA approved by a federal agency on the basis of an Indirect Cost Proposal but has not been fully validated as a Final NICRA. An expired NICRA is a Final NICRA that was not renewed by a federal agency and its valid term expired. An expired or provisional NICRA must also certify that the represented rates are accurate and applicable during the grant term.
- ***Other Supporting Documentation:*** This would need to be approved by DOC to show that indirect costs are real costs.

Block Grantees and subgrantees requesting an indirect cost rate not greater than the Federal De Minimis Rate may submit a brief (1-2 sentence) statement of the claimed rate and the cost basis. All entities are still responsible for ensuring costs charged to the RFFC Program are reasonable, necessary, and related expenses, and that all appropriate records are maintained for meeting all audit provisions of the agreement.

Appendix C: Meaningful and Direct Benefits to Priority Populations and Communities

The RFFC Program will prioritize investments to the populations most exposed to high fire hazard and most burdened by environmental, socioeconomic, and health inequities associated with wildfire vulnerability. Within the RFFC Program, these populations are referred to as "priority populations" and include disadvantaged communities (DACs), severely disadvantaged communities (SDACs), and vulnerable populations.

- The following definitions marked with an asterisk (*) are income-based definitions of DACs and SDACs. The RFFC Program will follow these definitions for reporting purposes in accordance with the 2024 Climate Bond to ensure that projects will provide meaningful and direct benefits to priority populations. These definitions do not determine eligibility for RFFC Program funding. See Section 3: Regional Block Grant Activities and Section 4: Coordinating Block Grant Activities for information on RFFC Program eligibility.
- ***Disadvantaged Community (DAC):*** A community with a median household income of less than 80% of the area average or less than 80% of statewide median household income.
- ***Severely Disadvantaged Community (SDAC):*** A community with a median household income of less than 60% of the area average or less than 60% of statewide median household income.
- ***Vulnerable Population:*** A subgroup population within a community or region that faces a disproportionately heightened risk or increased sensitivity to impacts of climate change and that lacks adequate resources to cope with, adapt to, or recover from such impacts. For the purposes of the RFFC Program, vulnerable populations will be determined based on their disproportionately heightened risk or increased sensitivity to wildfire impacts. California Native American tribes are vulnerable populations in accordance with CNRA's guidance for Delivering a Successful Climate Bond.

Priority populations in wildfire-prone areas can include low-income residents, California Native American tribes, agricultural or migrant workers, people of color, renters, non-English speakers, and elderly or disabled individuals, or any other population or community with limited resources and exposure to high wildfire risk. Residents of these types of communities commonly experience increased health problems and socioeconomic and environmental vulnerability. Many of these challenges result from a history of colonization, decades of fire suppression, inequitable land use and zoning policies that lack meaningful community input, and underinvestment, which forced many into high-risk areas and disrupted traditional land stewardship practices.

The RFFC Program recognizes that the term "disadvantaged" overlooks the many assets these communities possess, and particularly the community residents for whom these places are home. In many of these communities, organized groups of neighborhood leaders are actively engaged in local fire resilience capacity building and planning efforts, cultural burning and traditional land stewardship practices, environmental justice policy campaigns, and other activities to make their communities healthier, safer, and more resilient. These efforts are particularly important today since these communities will disproportionately experience the impacts of climate change. The

RFFC Program is structured to provide tools and resources to implement strategies to ensure vulnerable populations can also experience the benefits of wildfire resilience investment.

Understanding Meaningful and Direct Benefits to Priority Populations

RFFC Program and Project Priorities

DOC will use the definition of "meaningful and direct benefits" found in Section 7: Definitions and Reference Material to evaluate Block Grantee workplans, inform negotiated award consultations, and review proposed implementation projects.

When developing workplans and reviewing implementation project information, DOC staff will review the proposed initiative and all supporting materials on a case-by-case basis to assess the extent to which the workplan activities or implementation project meets the RFFC Program priorities, including providing meaningful benefits to priority populations. The determination of whether the workplan or project meets the criteria for meaningful and direct benefits to priority populations and summary information on how that determination was made will be included in RFFC Program outcomes reporting.

Evaluating Meaningful Benefits to a Priority Population

In determining whether a project provides meaningful and direct benefits to a priority population, DOC will consider each criterion separately.

> **Point 1:** Ensures the creation of direct, tangible, and substantial benefits to individuals of the priority population that would not have materialized without its implementation. The benefits are not incidental, indirect, or speculative, and can be articulated.

Point 1 stipulates that a project will only be considered to result in a meaningful benefit if a causal link between project activities and realized benefits to residents of a priority population is demonstrated. "Direct" and "tangible" are intended to reflect specific project results that clearly affect a discrete set of residents within a Block Grantee area.

For instance, a home hardening program that directly funds the retrofitting of low-income community residents' homes would provide direct benefits to that population. In contrast, a home hardening grant open to all residents in the county, not prioritized or restricted to the vulnerable populations within the county, would be considered to provide indirect benefits. Substantial means that the benefits are reasonably proportional to the scale of the project being undertaken. A project where most of the claimed benefits accrue to other parties would be incidental, not substantial.

Measurable is intended to mean that the benefits can be meaningfully assessed either quantifiably or qualitatively. The RFFC Program requires that Block Grantees identify and report on established program metrics throughout the grant term to track and measure various benefits created by the program. However, in certain cases the act of measuring a benefit may be technically possible, but financially, practically, or administratively infeasible. DOC staff will strive to be judicious and transparent in considering whether results that cannot be feasibly measured at a specific time are still meeting the requirements of Point 1. An example of a meaningful benefit that may be technically possible but infeasible to monitor could be the preservation of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge in California Native American communities through

wildfire risk reduction projects. While the preservation of cultural heritage is a profound and meaningful benefit of wildfire resilience work, the sensitive and intangible nature of these outcomes coupled with the financial and administrative burden makes this difficult to monitor directly. In such a case, a proxy may be used to measure the benefit, such as the number of cultural sites identified, community workshops held, stories highlighted, narratives collected, or partnerships formed with tribal organizations.

> **Point 2:** Protects or enhances a priority population's resources and quality of life by building fire resilience, such as reducing risks to the community or population from fire hazards, protecting resources threatened by wildfire (*e.g.*, drinking water supply/quality, healthy forests, hardening of critical infrastructure, etc.), or creating/enhancing community or population assets (*e.g.*, wetlands, resilience centers, etc.).

This criterion is intended to allow for protection or enhancement of a wide range of RFFC Program-related and community-defined resources and assets to be considered meaningful benefits. Projects may create new, protect existing, or enhance existing resources or assets. Communities may define their own community assets through engagement. Similarly, negative impacts may be defined by communities and reductions to existing negative impacts would be considered a meaningful benefit.

> **Point 3:** The project directly responds to the priority population's expressed need or desired benefit, either through direct project input or as part of a larger planning or engagement effort. The project is inherently designed to meet needs that have been identified by the priority population and each part of the project from scoping through implementation has integrated input from priority populations to the maximum extent feasible.

Point 3 seeks to ensure that projects are inherently designed to meet needs that have been identified by the priority populations and that appropriately scaled community participation—from a minimum of providing information to affected communities and offering pathways for further engagement, through involvement in developing solutions and project features, to empowering communities as final decision makers—is considered in all phases of project work.

Identifying Priority Population Needs

In most cases, the needs of priority populations should be identified directly by community members themselves. This may be through RFFC Program-specific engagement efforts, or engagement efforts that were conducted during previous planning efforts. Examples of relevant previous planning efforts could include local or county-wide planning projects such as a General Plan, Climate Action Plan, Wildfire Action Plan, Community Wildfire Protection Plan, community resilience plan, or other planning related to wildfire resilience and education workshops conducted by organizations without land use authority. Applicants should be prepared to justify how previous planning efforts captured the needs of individual communities in question, for instance if the planning effort conducted engagement in those communities or relied on advisory bodies made up of community members.

General community engagement conducted for other RFFC Program-related work may be considered sufficient for the purpose of identifying priority population needs if

engagement is structured to ensure equitable and meaningful participation within the community. Block Grantees should be prepared to demonstrate related engagement efforts to DOC staff. This may be accomplished through the use of the best practices guide for community engagement provided in Appendix D: Best Practices for Priority Population Engagement.

> **Point 4:** Does not result in a long-term degradation or reduction of any priority populations' resources identified in (2). Benefits should not be provided to one community or population at the expense of or burdening another – harms should be avoided and minimized. If the project has the potential to reduce or degrade community resources, then predefined mechanisms or commitments for remediation are in place to avoid these harms.

Long-term degradation or reduction of community resources will be assessed as follows:

1. The Block Grantee or subgrantee**:** During project scoping, planning, CEQA analysis, and/or development, Block Grantees and subgrantees must proactively seek to identify potential long-term harm that could occur due to project implementation.
2. The community: Block Grantees and subgrantees will, at a minimum, provide community members with project-specific information and a pathway for further engagement. As a result of this engagement, community members should be afforded a chance to review and comment on projects. This should include the ability for community members to identify potential harms resulting from the project.
3. DOC in our capacity as grant administrators and CEQA responsible agency (as applicable): DOC staff will review project and engagement documents to identify any potential harms that have not been noted by the Block Grantee, subgrantee, or community.

Regardless of what pathway harms are identified through, Block Grantees and subgrantees will be responsible for appropriately responding to the potential harm. Responses to concerns and potential harms may include further written analysis, additional meetings with community members, changes to the project design, or commitments for remediation.

DOC staff should be directly consulted when harms are identified and solutions to remediate the harm are proposed.

Optional Tools for Identifying Priority Populations

Communities in census tracts disproportionately affected by wildfire risks face heightened threats to health, safety, and economic stability. These impacts are often compounded by existing inequities in regional, social, and economic landscapes and by strained resources that can slow wildfire resilience efforts, deepening vulnerability. The cumulative impact of these factors supports the need for greater investment, or other interventions directed towards these vulnerable populations.

Block Grantees are encouraged to leverage their regional familiarity when identifying priority populations in their work area and may use whatever tools and resources are appropriate and available to them to do so. The following data platforms are examples

of tools that may be used to identify or map priority populations in specific parts of the state:

- CalEnviroScreen (CES) – A mapping tool developed by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) that uses environmental, health and socioeconomic information to produce percentiles showing communities disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution. The California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) uses CES as the basis for designations on "geographic, socioeconomic, public health, and environmental hazard criteria."
- Vulnerable Communities Platform – A mapping tool created by the California Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation that allows users to look at the intersection of current and projected climate impacts with relevant social and demographic factors. Block Grantees can use this map to get an overview of their area's vulnerabilities and pinpoint key challenges.
- Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) – A place-based mapping and database tool used to identify and quantify communities most susceptible to harm from emergencies, such as natural disasters and public health crises, using several social, economic and demographic factors. Created by the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the SVI uses U.S. Census tract data to rank communities experiencing social vulnerability, with a higher score indicating higher vulnerability.
- California Healthy Places Index – An interactive online data and geographic information system (GIS) mapping tool created by Public Health Institute's Public Health Alliance of Southern California that allows users to easily visualize the social and economic conditions that shape health in each neighborhood in California.
- Cal-Adapt – California's online tool that explores localized climate change projections for extreme heat, sea level rise, wildfire, and drought using data from the California Climate Change Assessment. The platform offers interactive maps, data visualizations and downloadable datasets.

Appendix D: Best Practices for Priority Population Engagement

The RFFC Program is committed to prioritizing and advancing benefits to priority populations through the development and execution of all deliverables.

To meet this goal, DOC has outlined basic requirements for priority population engagement in these guidelines. This Appendix provides a set of best practices Block Grantees should consider when engaging priority populations in their planning and project development efforts to meet the program requirements and meaningfully incorporate priority populations in their capacity building and wildfire resilience efforts. These best practices should serve as a starting place for each Block Grantee's work with priority populations and should be expanded upon to meet the needs of the communities with which each Block Grantee works.

Appropriate Scale

- Block Grantees should seek to engage the subject priority population to the greatest extent feasible for that project, taking the following into account:
    - The balance of priorities within the program.
    - Which commitments the Block Grantee or partner can actually make to the priority population.
    - Costs and benefits of higher levels of engagement to the priority population.
    - Availability of demonstrated community support (*e.g.*, community benefits agreements, letters of support, or evidence of opportunities to veto the project).
    - Previous engagement around the project or issue area.

Language Access

- Materials used to conduct outreach to priority populations should be translated to the most spoken language in the relevant community, and, where feasible, into the second and third most spoken languages in that community.
- Block Grantees should employee bilingual staff or hire bilingual subcontractors to facilitate engagement with priority populations.
- Block Grantees should provide interpretation services for the most spoken languages in the relevant communities at each meeting.
- Offer at least one public meeting during each stage of a plan or project's development in the most spoken language of the relevant community.
- Incorporate indigenous names alongside modern names for places referenced in outreach materials whenever possible.

Meeting Notifications

- All hearing, workshop and/or meeting times should ideally be posted at least three weeks ahead of time, but in no event will they be posted less than 72 hours ahead of time.
- Meeting notices should be easy to find and shared via multiple formats (*e.g.*, door-to-door outreach, mailings, online, at physical locations frequented by priority population members, etc.).
- Door-to-door outreach should be prioritized over online postings and mailings.

- All meeting materials, including agendas, reference documents, translated materials, and detailed information regarding participation should be shared at least 72 hours in advance of the hearing or meeting, and further in advance where feasible.
- All meeting materials, including agendas, reference documents, translated materials, and detailed information regarding participation should be provided to key community-based stakeholders for dissemination to interested residents well in advance of the hearing or meeting.
- Translated materials should be posted at the same time as all other materials.

In-Person Meetings

- Provide children's activities (*e.g.*, stickers, coloring books, etc.) or childcare to allow caregivers to attend.
- Host meetings at a location accessible via public transit and/or provide transportation to and from the meeting.
- Provide refreshments and/or food at the meeting if the meeting is held during regular mealtimes.
- Provide multiple options for participation (*e.g.*, in-person or virtual, verbal, written, tactile, etc.).
- Offer meetings during non-business hours to allow broad participation by members of the public.

Virtual Meetings

- For meetings conducted via webinar, offer a telephone call-in option for individuals who may not have access to reliable internet.
- In situations where multiple individuals from one household log-in or call-in using one line, allow each person on the line time to speak equal to that allowed for a single commenter calling in from their own line. This should be allowed without the household having to disconnect and reconnect to return to the queue.
- Offer meetings during non-business hours to allow broad participation by members of the public.