Volunteer Fire Assistance

State of Alaska Division of Forestry

October 2016

Where Does the Funding Come From?

USDA Forest Service awards Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) funding to the State of Alaska, Division of Forestry (DOF) each federal fiscal year to pass through to rural volunteer fire departments.

Due to federal budget constraints Rural Fire Assistance (RFA) funding is not available to apply for.

Volunteer Fire Assistance are award of Federal financial assistance and is subject to USDA 7 CFR 2016, (A-102) Uniform Requirements, 2 CFR 225 Cost Principles, and OMB Circular A-133 as implemented by USDA Regulation 7 CFR 3052. All Federal and Recipient matching/cost share contributions are subject to all relevant OMB Circulars and Code of Federal Regulations

Application Process Overview

- A maximum of $7,500 per department is available to apply for. The criteria and application are available on Forestry's web site http://forestry.alaska.gov/fire/vfa.htm
- Application period is from November 1, 2016 – January 31,2017. Applications must be completed by VFDs and postmarked, emailed or date stamped by March 1st . VFDs submit applications to nearest DOF office. This is a date change from previous years.
- Be sure to obtain a State of Alaska Vendor Number at: http://doa.Alaska.gov/dof/iris/vendor.html A vendor number must be obtained in order to receive a VFA award.
- Review application for completeness prior to submitting!
- Each spring an interagency committee meets to award funding.

VFA Grant Basic Criteria

- Serve a population of 10,000 or less.
- Be registered with Alaska State Fire Marshall's office at the time application is submitted and submit a copy of the registration.
- Be in compliance with past VFA grant awards.
- Submittal of documentation of 10% minimum non federal matching funds with application.
- Submittal of signed Certifications, Assurances & Drug Free Workplace forms and Fire Department Registration with application. Submit certification of meeting NIMs requirements.
- Application postmarked|date stamped by January 31, 2017.

Ineligible for VFA funding

- Repair, construction or purchase of buildings.
- Land acquisition.
- Pressurized waterlines and hydrants.
- Emergency medical equipment.
- Any equipment not fire related.
- Footwear/boots not associated with a vendor PPE package.
- Normal operating expenses.
- Any single item costing $4999.99 or more including match and shipping.

Documentation of Match

- Matching funds must be at least 10% of total funding requested.
- Copies of invoices or cancelled checks can be used as match documentation.
- Federal funds can not be used as match.
- For matching purposes up to $750.00 of in-kind services may be used.

<u>In- kind services can consist of:</u>

Unpaid attendance at fire protection training courses and/or workshops at the equivalent pay rate of EFF 3 ($14.73 in 2016). Paid attendance at normal rate of pay if an employee of the VFD. Copy of roster of the course or workshop required with signatures, date, title and brief description of the class/workshop.

Time, equipment, space, staff salaries, etc. These items come from another budget but are committed to the goals of the project for which you are applying for funds.

VFA Grant Award Meeting

- An interagency and/or DOF committee meets to award funding in the late spring of each year. Participating Agencies can include- the State Fire Marshall's office, AFS/Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, US Fish& Wildlife Service, Division of Forestry and USDA Forest Service.

- Total VFA requests from VFDs average well over $200,000 a year. Average amount awarded each year is approximately $150,000 - $250,000 and is dependant on continued receipt of federal funding.

VFA Grant Award Meeting

Agency representatives review and discuss each application. Higher priority is given to:

- Newly established (less than 12 months) approved fire departments.
- Fire departments that have not previously received VFA funding.
- Fire departments that have a cooperating agreement with the Alaska Division of Forestry, a Department of Interior Agency or the USDA Forest Service to attack wildland fires within their service area. Usually it is only DOF Area offices that have an agreement with a VFD.
- Purchase of equipment especially used on wildland fires, such as portable pumps, fold-a tanks, hose, communications equipment, etc.
- Training (documented; either structural or wildland).
- Documented match exceeds 10%.

Post Grant Award Meeting

- Division of Forestry will notify all VFDs who applied for VFA funding of award amounts, if any.

- Checks for VFA awards are typically mailed late spring/ early summer with a letter from the local Forestry office outlining grant compliance requirements and post award documentation VFDs need to provide to their local Forestry office. Compliance documentation must be submitted by October 31 of the following year.

- Checks MUST be cashed within 90 days of issue date otherwise they will be voided.

VFA Record Keeping

- Establish a binder for your VFA application.
- Keep copies of application, documentation of match and assurances & certifications.
- Keep copies of notes and all correspondence.
- Make a copy of any award checks.
- Prior to the next grant cycle (Novemeber 1st) submit to Forestry copies of receipts for equipment purchased with previous year grant award funds, copies of training rosters if training was funded, training materials purchased etc. All funds granted must be used for items specified in the application.
- Keep records for 5 years from grant award unless an audit is taking place, then keep for 3 years after conclusion of the audit.
- Establish and maintain an equipment and supply tracking system to track items purchased with VFA funds. Refer to 2017 VFA Manual.

END

Thank You