STATE OF ALASKA DIVISION OF

FORESTRY & FIRE PROTECTION

VOLUNTEER FIRE CAPACITY GRANT MANUAL

2027

AK-DFFP

STATE OF ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF FORESTRY & FIRE PROTECTION

2026-27 VOLUNTEER FIRE CAPACITY GRANT MANUAL

Federal grant dollars from the USDA Forest Service available to improve fire protection capabilities in unprotected or inadequately protected areas.

CFDA #10.664

2027

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE – OVERVIEW

The **Volunteer Fire Capacity (VFC)** program is funded through the US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS). The objective of the VFC program is to improve the capacity and capability of rural and volunteer fire protection districts that protect rural communities and play a substantial cooperative role in the suppression of wildland fires.

A Volunteer Fire Capacity grant is an award of Federal Financial Assistance and is subject to the OMB guidance in subparts A through F of 2 CFR Part 200 as adapted and supplemented by the USDA in 2 CFR Part 400. Adoption by USDA of the OMB guidance in 2 CFR 400 gives regulatory effect to the OMB guidance in 2 CFR 200, where full text may be found.
Electronic copies of the CFRs can be obtained at the following website: www.ecfr.gov.

Public Law 95-313, Sec. 7, requires a 50% - 50% matching share, up to a limit of $22,500.00. However, a limit of $10,000.00 per fire department has been imposed by the Alaska Division of Forestry & Fire Protection (DFFP) so that more fire departments will have the opportunity to participate. DFFP will also provide match of funds up to 90% with 10% of the total project cost matched by the fire department. Local non- federal matching funds must be available and documented when application is made. Please upload documentation of matching funds with your application (in pdf. file format), there is an in-kind form available as reference. Failure to provide this documentation will be grounds for disqualification. Please see page 10 to review what qualifies as match.

ELIGIBILITY

- To qualify, the LOCAL FIRE AGENCY must be an established and registered fire department as determined by the Alaska Division of Fire & Life Safety.
- The LOCAL FIRE AGENCY must have a current UEI number which can be obtained on SAM.gov.
- The LOCAL FIRE AGENCY's boundaries **cannot** contain an incorporated city with a population over 10,000. The population of an area serviced by a fire department is not important, as long as there is no incorporated city over 10,000 within the district boundaries.
- The LOCAL FIRE AGENCY should protect rural communities and play a substantial cooperative role in the suppression of wildland fires.
- It is preferable, but not mandatory, that the LOCAL FIRE AGENCY be a party to an agreement with DFFP (as in mutual aid agreement) and/or a cooperative fire agreement with a USFS or Department of Interior (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, National Parks Service or Fish and Wildlife Services)**. Please be prepared to provide a copy of the agreement if requested.**
- Projects that do not indicate improvement of the protection capabilities will not be eligible.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

- **Call Volume** – One indicator of need is the number of fire runs made by the LOCAL FIRE AGENCY. Since VFC supports wildland and structural needs, call volume counts should include both but **NOT** medical and rescue. The review committee will rely on data supplied by the applicant and by the Office of State Fire Marshal.
- Alaska National Fire Information Reporting System (ANFIRS) - Fire Reporting in ANFIRS is critical to capturing Alaska's statistics which in turn are forwarded to the US Fire Administration. These statistics play a huge role in the national formula used to determine how much VFC funding comes to Alaska each federal fiscal year. For more information, visit: https://dps.alaska.gov/fire/alaskafirestatistics

- **VFC Award Previous Years** – Fire departments must be current on the past 5 VFC grant awards in order to be eligible for this year's program. This means providing proof of expenditures (invoices, receipts, cashed checks) for last year's purchases to DFFP. Rotating funding to more fire departments by limiting back-to-back years of VFC funding is another way to attempt to distribute dollars more equitably. Although this may be disruptive to long-term plans for a fire department to stretch purchasing over several years, the opportunity for funding more fire departments is the goal. Awards will be made to maximize the number of rural fire departments that will benefit from this program.
- **National Incident Management System (NIMS) Compliance –** NIMS training is required under Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD-5) to receive federal funding, contracts, grants, training, and reimbursement of disaster recovery funds. For details visit: http://fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/nims_training_program.pdf

FEMA's Emergency Management Institute offers FREE online NIMS-compliant training ranging from 1-3 hours in length. For a course list, visit: https://training.fema.gov/nims/

For the purposes of the VFC grants, IS-700.A, IS-100.B, IS-800b, IS-200b will meet the requirement.

No one criterion listed above will assure or eliminate a fire department from funding. A combination of these factors will be part of the evaluation.

APPLICATION PROCESS & INSTRUCTIONS

The application must be completed electronically in DFFP's Online Application System (OLAS): https://dnr.alaska.gov/olas.

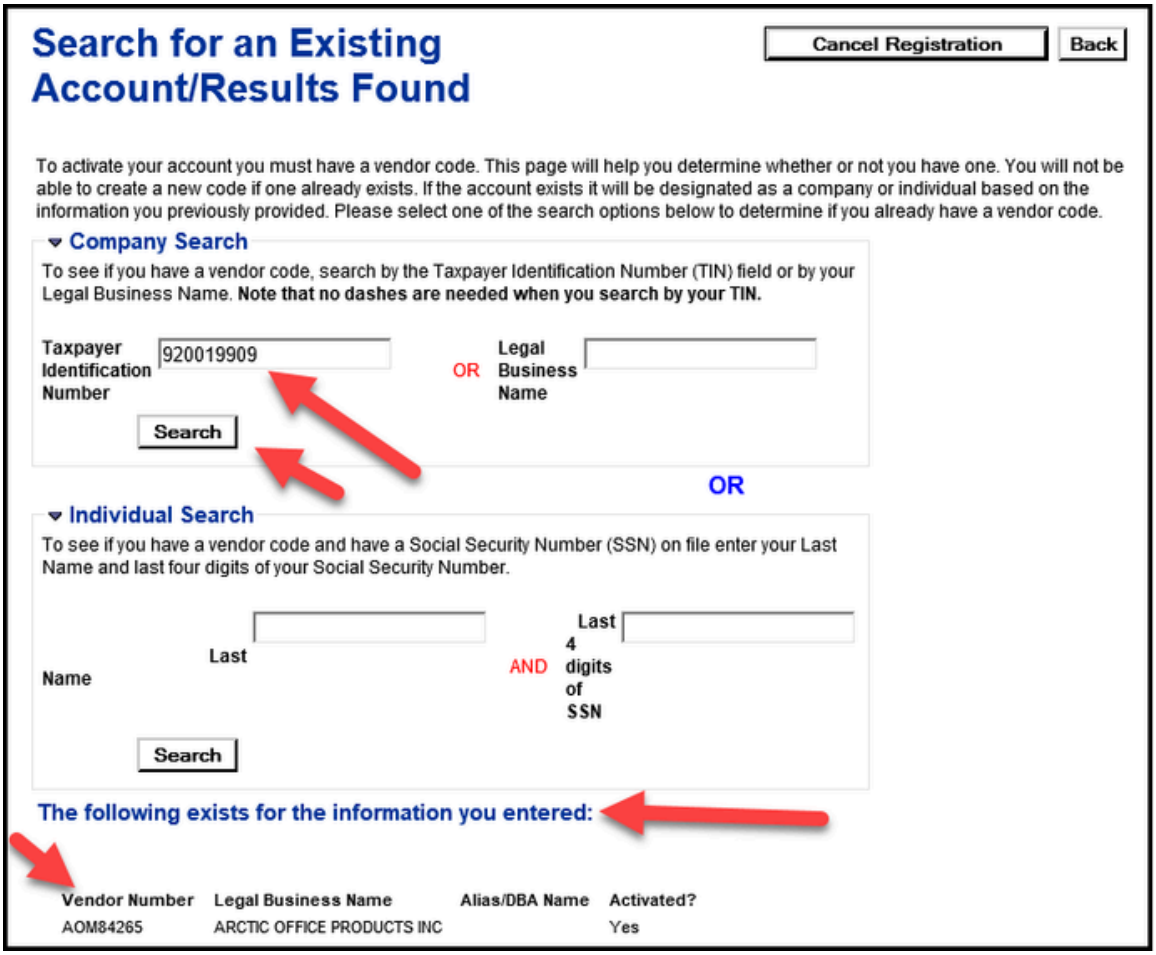
BEFORE YOU APPLY

- A Fire Dept. Identification Number (FDID) is required to register in OLAS.
- NEW IN 2027! Applicants must have an active UEI number to receive payment. Each VFD must determine if they fall under an organized Borough or tribal government, and IF that has a current UEI. VFDs that do not must apply for a UEI in SAM.gov. More info on UEI and SAMs here: https://www.fsd.gov/gsafsd_sp/en/entity-registration-what-s-the-difference-between-only-getting-a-unique?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0051214
- VFDs must register in OLAS prior to filling out an VFC application. It's the VFDs responsibility to remember the OLAS username/password. If forgotten, one can click the links for forgotten username and/or password on the sign-in page. If your VFD has equipment registered in OLAS, use the same username and password to access VFC OLAS.
- *When registering for the first time*, be sure to mark the "Yes" radio button when asked if you are a Volunteer Fire Department. Even if you have a couple of salaried members, you can still be considered a VFD.
- A State of Alaska (SOA) Vendor Number and EFT Agreement are required for electronic distribution of VFC awards. **No paper checks will be sent.**
- Know your vendor number prior to filling out an application. If your VFD lies within an organized borough, for example, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, please contact your borough to obtain the correct SOA vendor number for your department. Also, check with the admin officer for your fire dept to see if an SOA vendor number has already been issued. DFFP CANNOT assist with obtaining/finding a VFD's SOA vendor number.
- If you don't know the department's SOA vendor number -look it up by using the SOA Vendor Self Service application - see next page for instructions.

https://iris-vss.alaska.gov/PRDVSS1X1/Advantage4HYPERLINK "https://iris-vss.alaska.gov/PRDVSS1X1/Advantage4"

By clicking the Register button and reaching the Search for an Existing Account page. Once you get to this page, if you are a company, under Company Search, enter your nine-digit Employer Identification Number (without dashes), in the Taxpayer Identification Number field, then click Search.

If you exist in the SOA accounting system, your Vendor Number will appear under the verbiage, The following exists for the information you entered. A screen shot is below:



If you are an **individual**, under **Individual Search,** you will need to enter your **Last Name AND** the **last 4 digits of your SSN**. If you exist in our accounting system, your Vendor Number will appear under the verbiage, "*The following exists for the information you entered*".

If your vendor number/vendor information does not show up in Vendor Self Service, there are two options available for you to become a vendor and obtain your vendor number.

1. You may elect to sign up for Vendor Self Service (VSS) by creating a new account. By having access to VSS, you can maintain/view vendor information, view payment information, respond to solicitations online, view invoice information, create invoices, etc. VSS is optional.

The link to the home page of Vendor Self Service:
http://doa.alaska.gov/dof/vendor.html#vss

Once you are on the home page, please refer to our Job Aids, Registration section, Create a New Account job aid, in order to create a new account in VSS, to establish a vendor record in our accounting system, and obtain a vendor number.

2. If you decline VSS, Option 2 is to fill out a State of Alaska Substitute W9 at this link: http://doa.alaska.gov/dof/forms/resource/sub_form_w9.pdf.

Instructions are provided at the top of the W9 on where to send the W9 it once it is complete. Dept. of Admin/Div. of Finance/Vendor Help Desk will then review your W9, run an IRS TIN Match between your Legal Name and Taxpayer ID Number, and provide a vendor number. Please make sure you include an email address on your submitted W9.

In addition of having a SOA Vendor number, VFDs must also have an Electronic Payment Agreement (EFT) form on file with the Department of Administration, Division of Finance, to receive payments electronically.

Please complete the Electronic Payment Agreement form for Vendors at this link:
http://doa.alaska.gov/dof/forms/resource/EDI_agreement.pdf

Please make sure to include a voided check and any other banking documentation to support your banking information provided on the form. Your form will not be processed if one of those pieces of documentation is not attached.

The DFFP cannot assist you with SOA vendor number or EFT agreement issues. If you need assistance, please email:

doa.dof.vendor.helpdesk@alaska.gov

- OLAS will not accept applications submitted after the deadline of 2400 on December 17th, 2026.
- Each applicant must meet the match requirements. This means that for every VFC grant dollar, a 10% or higher match (cash or in-kind; refer to page 10) must be provided by the fire department. The total "project" value is 100% (90% VFC / 10% match).
- Project Detail Information (requested items)
  - **Total Cost:** The actual cost of the items being applied for purchase.
  - **Cash match:** Dollars spent to purchase items included on the grant and documented on the invoice. The cash supplied for the balance of the purchase will satisfy the LOCAL FIRE AGENCY match requirements.
  - **In-kind match:** The LOCAL FIRE AGENCY non-monetary matching portion of the grant award that has measurable value and is donated or

volunteered. These contributions may be used when a cash match is not available for the LOCAL FIRE AGENCY's share of the matching funds.

- LOCAL FIRE AGENCY can use both cash and/or in-kind match in the grant application.
- The columns will automatically total at the bottom (Total Cost, Matching Share Amount).
- Group items as much as reasonably possible, yet being specific enough to provide information to the selection committee is encouraged. For example, if the LOCAL FIRE AGENCY wants to purchase wildland hose it can be listed on one line: Wildland Hose – 4-1'x100", 1-1½"x50'. Same listings apply for nozzles, adapters, etc.
- A vendor PPE package is one line item; do not list items within the PPE package separately. Only a vendor PPE package can include footwear/boots.
- The application must be electronically signed by an authorized agent of the fire department (Fire Chief, Treasurer, or Board Chairperson). The application must include the required federal forms with signature; AD-1047, AD-1049, FS-1500-35, SF-424B. The federal forms must be downloaded, signed, scanned and uploaded into OLAS.
- Purchases must be completed, and documentation provided to area FMOs before the next year's VFC application period opens in October. There can be special requests made for extensions if shipping time is delayed, please contact VFC program lead, Sarah Saarloos for extension requests at sarah.saarloos@alaska.gov.

ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS

	ALLOWABLE	
COST ITEMS	**YES**	**NO**
Organization improvements, such as LOCAL FIRE AGENCY legal and administration fees, election costs, or advertising used to form a new rural fire protection district. This does not include wages or payments resembling employee payments.	**YES**	
Structural or Wildland fire-fighting supplies such as basic tools, fire line hand tools, hose, adapters/reducers, fittings, valves, pumps, nozzles, fold-a-tanks, portable tanks, chainsaws, hydrant wrenches, SCBA systems (allowed but a low priority item for funding), generators and weather kits.	**YES**	
Structural or Wildland training expenses, such as instructor fees, travel expenses, tuition costs, classroom materials for either basic or advanced courses.	**YES**	
Structural or Wildland equipment, repairs, upgrades, or safety improvements for the acquisition or modification of firefighting equipment, which may include labor and materials. The use of grant funds to pay FEPP fees or to improve FEPP equipment is appropriate (including costs of transportation or acquisition charges). For these purposes only, "equipment" is considered rolling stock or vehicles such as engines, tankers, tenders, etc. that actually are used directly in putting a fire out. Homeland Security/FEMA may also prove to be another funding resource.	**YES**	
Structural or Wildland basic PPE, such as new generation fire shelters, fire resistant shirts and pants, hard hats, eye protectors, gloves, boots (only if part of a PPE package from a vendor) and turnouts.	**YES**	
Structural or Wildland communications equipment, such as narrow band or narrow-band compatible hand-held or vehicle units, pagers and accessories and Global Position Units (GPS). All communications equipment must be P25 compliant or compatible.	**YES**	
Freight or shipping costs for allowable items.	**YES**	
Acquisition of land.		**NO**
Construction or remodeling of buildings or any work on "real" property (such as wells). Pressurized waterlines and hydrants.		**NO**
Emergency medical equipment, rescue equipment or extraction equipment (VFC funds are for fire use only). Examples: Cut Off Saw, Spine Board.		**NO**

	ALLOWABLE	
COST ITEMS	**YES**	**NO**
Personnel wages (as in employees on a payroll) will only be funded if they relate to "instructor fees" for training project activities. These grant dollars are not intended to pay for wages, salaries, stipends or other volunteer/employee payments unless it relates to being an instructor. Utilities, administrative overhead costs, fuel and other normal operating expenses will not be funded.		**NO**
Office equipment, computers, software, cameras, drones.		**NO**
Footwear/Boots NOT associated with vendor PPE package.		**NO**
Any single item costing over **$9999.99.**		**NO**
Logo wear and logo items (t-shirts, sweatshirts, jackets, pens, flashlights etc. printed with a fire department's logo).		**NO**
Rain suits of any kind.		**NO**

DOCUMENTATION OF MATCH

The VFC program requires that grant recipients of federal grant monies provide either matching dollars or an in-kind match. At the time the application is submitted, the match will be identified and documented as cash (deducted from the total cost) or in-kind (described in the detailed information provided below). *Match documentation must be submitted/uploaded into OLAS as a PDF file only.*

- **Cash Match:** Dollars spent to contribute towards the project. Equipment or supplies purchased that leverage the intent of VFC funding.
- **In-kind Match:** Volunteer hours for work done on the project items (like installing a pump or attending a training session), donated space for holding a training session, and donated labor from a vendor providing one of the items purchased under the grant. Donated labor or volunteer hours can be calculated at the current year EFF-4 rate/per hour. Documentation needs to be provided for the in-kind match, either the DFFP In-Kind pdf, or:

DESCRIPTION	DOCUMENTATION EXAMPLES & DESCRIPTION
Volunteer Hours	Membership, Fire Defense Board, or board meeting sign-in sheets that show the purpose of meetings, date of meetings, length of time, and a list of names.
	Training roster sheet that shows: type of training, name of instructor, date, length of time, and list of names.
	Any kind of log showing a person's name, date, and time worked, and activities performed. (Do not use if the individual's occupation is a mechanic; use professional time.)
Donated Supplies	A receipt showing the item, cost, date, and signature of the person making the donation. A donation receipt from the LOCAL FIRE AGENCY would be best.
Donated Professional Time (mechanic, attorney, physician, etc.)	Individual must provide an invoice that shows the business name and address, stating the time donated by dates and hours, and the activity performed. In addition, **state the occupational hourly/daily rate** for services provided.

DESCRIPTION	DOCUMENTATION EXAMPLES & DESCRIPTION
Donated Use Time (meeting hall, mechanic shop, etc.)	Individual must provide an invoice that shows business name and address stating time donated by dates and hours and activity performed. In addition, **state the occupational hourly/daily rate** for services provided.
Mileage	Mileage will be reimbursed according to the State of Alaska rates for the corresponding timeframe. Proper documentation includes miles driven, destination, purpose, and driver. Current mileage rates are **$0.655 per mile for vehicles & $1.740 for airplanes** (includes fuel).
Unallowable Match	Response to actual fire dispatches, hazard mitigation activities, medical dispatches, training associated with medical or extrication exercises.

Application Deadlines and Submission Process

Applications must be received into OLAS by **December 17th, 2026**.

- LOCAL FIRE AGENCY will receive their award status by April 2027 or sooner.

SELECTION PANEL

Any unallowable items will be identified in a pre-review process at the local DFFP office as well as a committee review process. When possible, it is expected a multi-agency group will meet in February or March to review the applications, but at a minimum DFFP staff and field representatives will meet to review, discuss each application and award funding.

TIME PERIOD COVERED BY THE GRANT	DEADLINES
Applications Due:	December 17, 2026
Fire Departments receive Notice of Award:	April 2027
Checks:	VFC awards will be transmitted electronically.
Purchasing for 2026-27 VFA year must be complete by:	October 2027
Submittal of 2026-27 receipts, proof of purchase(s) to local Forestry Office FMO:	October 2027; preferably sooner.
Time period in which documented In-Kind Match must fall:	December 2026 - October 2027

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY PURCHASE

DFFP will **not** fund any single item over $4999.99. Equipment and supplies will be purchased at the most beneficial price, and the use of GSA purchasing is encouraged. If this is not possible, competitive bidding procedures or multiple price quotes may be utilized. Ownership purchased with VFC grant funds vests with the fire department.

TRACKING

As a federal grant recipient, LOCAL FIRE AGENCY is responsible for tracking all equipment and supplies purchased with VFC funding with a $2500 or more purchase price for a single item for a period of five years from the date of purchase. Therefore, the grant recipient needs to have a tracking or inventory system in place in order to meet these requirements. However, if any litigation, claim, negotiation, audit, or other action involving the records has been initiated prior to the end of the five-year period, the records shall be kept until all issues are resolved or until the end of the five-year period, whichever is later. Equipment and supply tracking records will include the grant year purchased, a description of the property, serial number or identification number, source of the property, acquisition date, cost, percentage of Federal participation, location and any ultimate disposition information, including the date of disposal and sale price, process of disposal (retained, sold, or traded in) and, if applicable, new owner. The LOCAL FIRE AGENCY is also responsible for conducting a physical inventory of VFC-funded equipment and supplies at least every two years, and the results are reconciled with the tracking records.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY MAINTENANCE

Equipment and supplies must be maintained in good condition.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES DISPOSAL

A competitive public process should be used to facilitate the sale of equipment and supplies, and, therefore, no private or individual sales meet the criteria.

Equipment with a fair market value per unit of less than $5,000 is considered a supply and may be retained, sold, or otherwise disposed of with no further obligation to the awarding agency. LOCAL FIRE AGENCIES are encouraged to insert documentation into the grant file for any equipment that is under $5,000 in value for future reference and documentation of how the value was determined.

For supplies that are unused with a residual inventory exceeding $5,000 in total aggregate fair market value upon termination or completion of the award, and if the supplies are not needed for any other federally-sponsored programs or projects, the LOCAL FIRE AGENCY is required to compensate the awarding agency for its share of the fair market value. If the LOCAL FIRE AGENCY plans on selling or transferring a piece of equipment, please contact the Fire Staff Officer before proceeding. Documentation will need to be provided, such as a letter with the proper documentation elements requesting approval to sell or transfer equipment. Any costs associated with the sale can be deducted from the sale price (advertising, repairs to prepare for sale, etc.) in order to identify the actual dollar amount to be returned to the federal agency.

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY MONITORING

DFFP is obligated to ensure that adequate equipment and supply tracking, and disposal procedures are in place by recipients of VFC funds. Therefore, on-site monitoring visits will be conducted on a random sample of recipients annually. The basis of the monitoring visits will be to review equipment and supplies acquired over the previous five years, along with proper disposal documentation.

DFFP CONTACTS

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