



**North Carolina Forest Service**  
**N.C. COMMUNITY FIREWISE MITIGATION GRANT PROGRAM**  
**2015**  
**Program Overview**

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**I. Overview:**

Firewise is a term associated with a national program that broadly defines the concept of applying practices to reduce the risk of homes igniting when approached upon by a wildfire. Practices include but are not limited to adjacent forest fuels, design criteria, construction material, landscape design and maintenance. The wildland-urban interface (WUI) is defined as where houses meet or intermingle with wildland vegetation. The WUI is where wildfires pose the biggest risk to human lives and structures. . North Carolina leads the country in the number of WUI acres, and is 5<sup>th</sup> in the number of homes in the WUI. With North Carolina being the 6<sup>th</sup> most rapidly urbanizing state in the country, it also is an area of widespread habitat fragmentation, introduction of invasive species and biodiversity loss.

**Program Administrator:** North Carolina Forest Service in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service.

**Program Authority**

Federal support to the NC Community Firewise Mitigation Grant Program is authorized by the National Fire Plan – Title IV Hazard Mitigation. The program operates as a cooperative partnership between the N. C. Forest Service and USDA Forest Service, Southern Region.

**Program Goal**

To develop, educate, enhance, implement, and support the Firewise concepts in wildland urban interface communities throughout North Carolina by encouraging citizen and community involvement to lessen or reduce the fire hazards and threats.

**Program Objectives**

- Assist communities in meeting the requirements for Firewise Communities USA recognition.
- Promote volunteerism, multi-cultural awareness, and involvement of non-profit organizations in implementing Firewise programs, particularly in communities where participation in reduction of fire hazard and risks efforts has been limited.
- Encourage citizens and communities to promote the long term sustainability of wildfire mitigation practices.
- Improve information and education of the benefits of protecting homes, structures, and lives in communities to lessen or reduce the fire hazards and threats. Provide educational programs and technical assistance to communities, individuals and organizations.
- Assist local governments with identified projects that will lead to reduced threat and risk from wildfires.

### **Program Eligibility**

Applicants may include sub-divisions, neighborhoods, rural communities, organized townships, tribal districts, fire department districts, and private non-profit organizations. Local governments and municipalities are not eligible for NC Community Firewise Mitigation Grant projects unless they are related to hazardous fuel mitigation projects in high hazard areas for wildfires.

Applicants must have had a Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment Plan utilizing the NFPA 1144 standard method conducted on it by a qualified N.C. Forest Service employee, or by a qualified consultant. Projects conducted on private land must be for the benefit of the whole community in lessening wildfire risks, and not for the benefit of an individual property owner. Final project and specific work areas approval shall be determined by the N.C. Forest Service.

### **Funds Available**

Grants are awarded for a maximum of **\$8,000** annually for project implementation, of which a maximum of **\$2,000** can be used for consulting and contracting services to assist with plan development. A grant request may not exceed 80% of the total project cost.

### **Cost Share Requirements**

The applicant, from sources other than federal funds, must contribute 20% of the total cost of the project. This amount may be in the form of cash or in-kind services.

## **II. FINANCIAL MATTERS**

### **Funding Information for Grant Projects**

This is a matching grant program requiring a 20% match. Grantees must provide a minimum local match equal to 20% of the total cost of the project. Funding is for programs, projects or activities not currently being funded and cannot be used to substitute for existing funds. Funds may be used within existing programs to initiate new program development or program expansion.

### **Matching Contributions**

Matching support may be in the form of *cash purchase* or *in-kind contributions*, and all such contributions must come from non-federal sources. Costs for this project may not be used as a match for any other federal cost-share project and federal funding from other sources may not be used to satisfy the match for this program. Documentation of all matching support must be maintained and submitted with reimbursement requests.

**Cash Purchases** are direct, out-of-pocket expenditures for eligible project activities that are supported by paid invoices, cancelled checks, and signed receipts or official payroll records.

**In-Kind Contributions** include: on-hand supplies, third party donations of supplies or equipment, and the value of time (including fringe benefits) and equipment spent by the Grantee's employees or volunteers on eligible project activities. Rates for volunteers performing tasks in their normal line of work are calculated at their current job rate. Assistance provided by Federal or N.C. Forest Service employees may not be claimed as part of the local match.

#### In-Kind Matching Guidelines

- Adult volunteers - \$22.55/hour
- Youth volunteers - \$7.25/hour (Federal minimum wage)
- Donated professional services – use customary rates for services provided
- Donations of materials – use customary retail rates
- Personnel/staff – use hourly wage rates (may also include fringe benefits)
- Equipment – use established use rates per hour, per mile, etc.
- Vehicle mileage – .56¢ / mile (current federal standard mileage rate, business use)

#### **Ownership of Equipment and Supplies Purchased with Grant Funds**

Unless otherwise specified, all equipment and supplies reimbursed remain the property of the contractor throughout their useful life span, to be used *exclusively* for activities related to the project or for other activities consistent with the goals and objectives of the *NC COMMUNITY FIREWISE MITIGATION GRANT PROGRAM*. If these conditions cannot be met, arrangements will be made to transfer ownership to the State.

#### **Ineligible Expenses for Grant Reimbursement**

- Expenses incurred *before or after* the contract period
- Any expense not part of an *approved* budget
- *Food, drinks, entertainment, and refreshments for meetings, volunteers, Firewise Days etc.*
- Costs associated with *preparing* the grant application
- Salaries of current staff, although they may qualify as match, if appropriate
- General overhead and administration charges, although they may qualify as match
- Expenses not supported by proper documentation (such as paid receipts, invoices, etc.)
- Any other items / projects that may be questionable will be reviewed by the N.C. Forest Service to determine if they are acceptable under this grant.

### **III. PROJECT CATEGORIES**

Proposals may fit into one or more of the following categories. Some project examples, which support the program's objectives, are offered as a guide below. Applicants are encouraged to be creative and innovative in developing projects that address real community needs.

#### **Project Category**

##### **1. Community Wildfire Hazard Mitigation**

- Fuel treatments to increase a community's defensible space.
- Mechanical removal or reduction of hazard fuels.
- Development or improvement of existing firebreaks
- Individual home wildfire hazard assessments.
- Consulting services to conduct a community assessment
- Completion of a Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment Plan
- Leasing or contracting equipment and other resources to complete an eligible project.
- Other mitigation activities that are recognized or projects formally recommended by a N.C. Forest Service Firewise Specialist.
- Grant projects started in previous years as a multi-year project will receive priority funding consideration.

## 2. Information, Education and Training

- In-House Training and Continuing Education
- Public Education/Workshops
- Materials/Brochures for public use/training and non-promotional wildland/urban interface education and safety materials that will be used within the community.

**NOTE:** *Based on recent changes to the Federal allocation of funds, projects which target any of the above topics will be given funding priority – where the proposal quality, budget and timeline are realistic and responsible.*

### **In-Eligible Projects or Programs**

Purchasing Fire equipment or apparatus for a fire department  
Producing promotional literature to enhance the sale of the community.  
Building roads for ingress or egress of the community.  
Town zoning revision and building code reviews  
Project acquisition & right-of-ways  
Any other project outside the intent of the Grant as interpreted by the N.C. Forest Service.

## **IV. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

### **General Information**

#### **Equal Access and Outreach to Underrepresented and under served Populations**

When developing project proposals, applicants are strongly encouraged to consider the needs of the entire community and incorporate strategies consistent with the following principles:

- Assure that all programs are accessible to all that qualify.
- Eliminate any discrimination on the grounds of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status.
- Work to ensure effective public participation and access to information.
- Strive to overcome linguistic, geographic and other barriers to meaningful participation.
- Reach out in ways that are proactive to persons who have not participated equally in programs and activities in the past.
- Use positive examples of program participation by minorities, women and other protected groups in pictures and other visual and audio public information materials.
- *All applicants must adhere to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Non-Discrimination Policy (provided at the end of this form) when implementing projects funded under this program.*

The goal of the NC Community Firewise Grant Program is for each community, large and small, to have an organized and effective means to assess, identify, educate and manage wildland urban interface fire risks. Proposals will be ranked for funding priorities according to how well they relate to this overall goal. Projects will benefit from having clearly stated goals, well-thought-out budgets, and well-planned scheduling that utilizes volunteers, creates local partnerships, promotes development of local community forestry programs, has a long-term focus and benefits and/or has an educational or technology transfer component. The program is designed to support new and innovative initiatives or expand existing programs that would not occur without grant funds. It is not intended to substitute for current funding levels.

**Non-Profit Program Development** *Organizations that qualify as non-profits under state and federal guidelines must provide current information about the organization's mission, organizational structure, volunteer actives and past activities in regard to wildland urban interface fire mitigation.*

### **Contract Requirements**

Grantees must comply with all applicable state and federal regulations. Project records must: (1) comply with generally accepted accounting principles; (2) document allowable costs; (3) be supported by source documentation such as canceled checks, paid bills, payrolls, time and attendance records and contracts; and be maintained for 5 years following the end of the contract period or until any audit begun during this period has been completed, and any findings are resolved, whichever is later. N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services contracts must be fully executed prior to initiation of any funded project. Applicants are referred to the following documents for federal administrative standards, cost principles and auditing standards:

- State and local governments and Indian tribes: 7 CFR 3016, 3017, 3018, 3052. OMB Circulars A-102, A-87, A-133.
- Non-profit organizations: 7 CFR 3019, 3017, 3018, 3052. OMB Circulars A-110, A-122, A-133.
- Educational Institutions: 7 CFR 3019, 3017, 3018, 3052. OMB Circulars A-110, A-21, A-133.

### **New State Contract Requirements**

State legislation was passed, 01 July 2005, requiring additional documentation and reporting for all applicants receiving state funds: [G.S.143-6.2](#) "Use of State Funds by Non-State Entities". State funds are defined as state allocations as well as federal funds administered by the State. [www.ncauditor.net/NonProfitSite/regulations/GS143-6.2.pdf](http://www.ncauditor.net/NonProfitSite/regulations/GS143-6.2.pdf)

This means all grantees must supply the new, state mandated forms with their contract package. These forms will be sent to you upon acceptance and approval of your request with the contract package.

For **governmental entities** (municipalities, state-funded educational facilities, K-12 schools, county governments and Cooperative Extension) are required to submit:

- Certification Regarding Lobbying
- Certification Regarding Debarment
- Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace

For **non-governmental entities**, must supply all of the above documentation along with the following:

- Certification of No Overdue Tax Debts
- Copy of IRS Federal Tax Exempt Letter or 501(c) Verification Form, as appropriate
- 501(c) Non-Profits Conflict of Interest Statement Certified/Approved by Board, as appropriate

Additional reporting is also required by the statute during the contract period **for non-governmental entities**. The reporting is based on total funds received from the state, not from the Firewise and Urban Interface Program alone. Reports must be submitted following each fiscal year the grant contract is active. Final reports may be submitted at contract completion if the grantee has no other state funding sources. Grantees failing to register and report this

information to the Office of State Budget and Management will not be allowed to receive additional grant funds. State Grant Compliance reporting is accomplished through the Office of State Budget and Management on line reporting system for their Grant Information Center ([www.ncgrants.gov](http://www.ncgrants.gov)).

### **Standards and Verification of Accomplishments**

Projects or printed material must be inspected prior to final reimbursement. The applicant agrees to grant permission to allow the N.C. Forest Service to examine all meeting records, products, and projects related to this program to verify that the project is completed and consistent with the requirements of this grant.

### **Allocation of Funds and Evaluation Criteria**

Funds are allocated on a competitive basis, subject to an evaluation system developed by the Division of Forest Resources with input from the National Firewise Program. The following criteria will be used in evaluating proposals:

- Consistent with program objectives and addresses an identified need
- Long-term benefit of the project beyond grant period
- Technical merit/competency
- Creativity and innovative approach
- Goal oriented, clearly defined purpose or objective of the project
- Promotion of volunteerism, partnerships and community support
- Visibility/public awareness and educational value
- Benefit to reduce wildland fire occurrence
- Budget: cost effective, supports project objectives, completeness, appropriate match
- Realistic time frame for project completion
- Clearly defined plans for site-specific projects, particularly fuel reduction projects
- Clarity and completeness of application and budget
- Support of culturally diverse values and needs/Support to under-served populations.

### **Payment Process**

Project grant funds will be distributed on a reimbursement basis. Partial reimbursement may be requested after the expense has been incurred on a quarterly basis, or at the completion of the project. Up to 4 reimbursements may be claimed during the project period. This means that your organization must have funds available to cover grant expenditures until reimbursement is made. The final reimbursement may not be distributed until the project has been completed and inspected by a N.C. Forest Service representative. Grantees must file a request for reimbursement; submit documentation/records for all grant-funded expenditures, all cash and all in-kind matches prior to payment. Copies of cancelled checks that match invoices are required documentation for reimbursement.

### **Private Consultants / Wildland Urban Interface Specialists**

The use of private consultants may be needed to adequately meet the needs for technical assistance and to ensure professional standards are implemented. Reasonable costs as a result of using private consultants are allowed as a portion of the grant request. The use of private consultants / Wildland Urban Interface Specialist shall not exceed \$2,000 to assist with plan development under this grant.

## **Timeline for Project Completion**

Recipients will be given **12 months** to complete their project if funding timelines allow. **Work on approved projects may begin only after contract forms are signed and submitted by the grantee and a fully executed contract is returned by the N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services.** A period of three (3) months should be anticipated, from the time of proposal submission, for the creation of a fully executed contract. Contract Period ends on the date listed on the fully executed Contract. No further work can be carried out for the grant, unless a time extension through a contract amendment has been previously executed. The final accomplishment report prepared by the Grantee must be accepted by the Department's Contract Administrator no later than the Contract end date specified in the contract, or approved Contract time extension amendment. The Grantee's final invoice or request for reimbursement must be received by the Department's Contract Administrator within 45 days after the end of the contract period.

***All expenditures and matching contributions must be made during this contract period. No work can be initiated until a mutually signed contract has been returned to an applicant. The N.C. Forest Service reserves the right to pro-rate grant awards. Decisions on allocations by the N.C. Forest Service are final.***

## **PROPOSAL FORMAT**

The proposal includes **4 parts**: 1. Application Form, 2. Budget Proposal, 3. Project Schedule, and 4. Proposal Narrative; plus any additional supplements required. **Proposals not formatted according to these instructions may be rejected without notice.** This grant package, the application form, the budget and the project schedule forms are available on the internet at: <http://www.ncfirewise.org>

**I Application Form** Complete the enclosed Application Form with Federal employer identification number (required), authorizing signatures signed in **BLUE INK**, etc.

**II Budget Proposal** Provide an itemized budget of all grant expenditures requested **and** for the match – indicate amounts for cash and in-kind contribution values. Each major project component from the proposal narrative **must** have a corresponding budget component. Budget estimates and match values must be reasonable and directly related to accomplishing the project objective. Refer to the sample budget for guidance, use multiple pages if needed.

**III Project Schedule/Timeline** Using the form provided (refer to the sample for guidance), provide the project outline, with the project steps: what will be done, who will do it, when it will be done, and accomplishments upon completion of each step (that is, significant events, deadlines, responsible parties, and measurement of success). All major activities listed must occur within the grant year whether funded by the grant or with matching funds and should be represented in the budget.

**IV Proposal Narrative** The narrative section is limited to **a maximum of 4 typewritten, pages**, not including supplements and additional information required for site-specific projects. The narrative should be specific and to the point. Departures from the format described below may result in automatic rejection.

**Project Title:** Short descriptive title.

**Background:** Briefly describe your community, agency or organization's current community fire prevention / education or wildfire prevention program/activities.

**Objectives:** Briefly describe what you plan to accomplish. List objectives in order of priority. Objectives should be realistic, measurable and attainable within the contract period.

**Statement of Need:** Briefly explain why this project is important **and** justify how it will contribute to the reduction of wildfires and/or improve overall forest health within the community. Public relations, education, and the potential for continuation of the project should also be included.

**Strategy/Methods:** If further detail is necessary beyond the Project Schedule/Timeline form, describe in detail the activities (or steps) that will take place to achieve the stated objectives. For projects with multiple objectives, this section may be divided into the major components and organized around specific activities or measurable objectives, such as hazard assessment and analysis, fuel reduction, Firewise Day activities, management plan implementation, tree inventory and analysis, Arbor Day celebration, educational brochure, etc.

**Visibility and Impact:** Explain how this project will be communicated to the public, stakeholders, public officials, targeted groups, etc. Describe any impact the project will have on public education concerning reducing wildfires or maintaining forest health in the wildland urban interface. Describe the long-term impact this project will have in the community. Describe the future plans/projects that will follow, or develop from this project.

**Project Coordinators, Partners and Cooperators:** Provide a primary contact (name, title and brief description of qualifications), for each individual responsible for: (1) overall project coordination, (2) financial/contractual matters, (3) technical matters. List any partnering/cooperating organizations/agencies and describe their role. Describe any volunteer involvement/partners.

**Final Products and Accomplishments:** Provide a bullet list of measurable accomplishments and/or final products which will result from completion of this project, and which will be described or documented in the final report.

**Outreach:** Describe any specific strategies to be used to reach out and include underserved populations and those with the greatest need, and the benefit from this project.

**Supplements (if applicable) Do not count toward 4-page narrative limit**  
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**Supporting Documents: *Optional*** - Letters of support within your organization and from partners, as well as committed volunteer organizations, and community groups may also be included.

**Location Map and Site Plan:** *Required for all demonstration and site-specific projects.* Include a general location map and a site plan for all on-the-ground projects. Site plan may be a sketch but should be detailed enough to show what you propose to accomplish.

### Maintenance Plan for Fuel Reduction Areas

Areas that request funding for fuel reduction / modification must submit a Hazardous Fuels Mitigation Plan, which must contain a 3 year plan for maintaining the area. Brush, forest fuels, and grass will regenerate on areas that are treated and must be maintained to be an effective and viable practice for reducing the fire hazard and risk in a community.

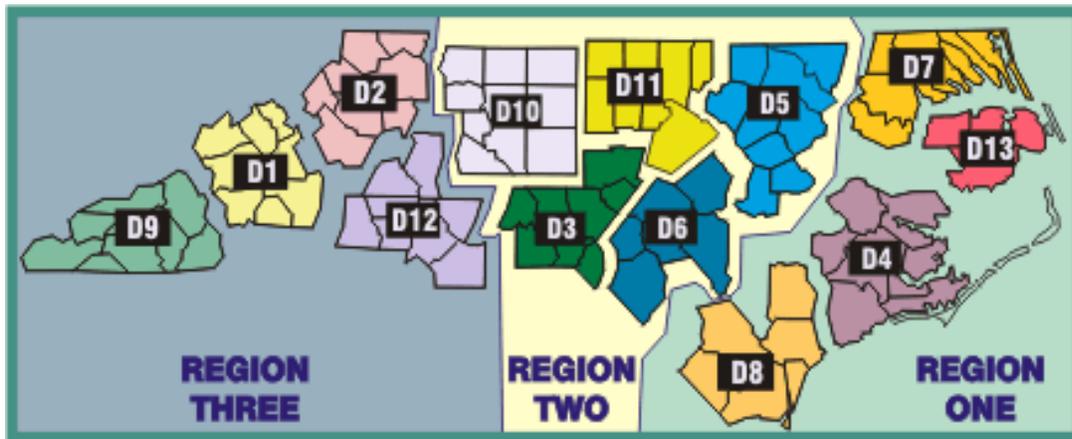
**For additional information about the Community Wildfire Hazard Mitigation Projects contact the appropriate Firewise Program Staff:**

#### CONTACT INFORMATION:

Eric Muecke  
220 Old Colony Rd  
Morganton, NC 28655  
828- 438-3795 Ext205  
[Eric.Muecke @ ncagr.gov](mailto:Eric.Muecke@ncagr.gov)  
Region 3

Greg Hicks  
3490 Big Woods Road  
Chapel Hill, NC 27517-7652  
919-542-1515  
[Greg.Hicks@ncagr.gov](mailto:Greg.Hicks@ncagr.gov)  
Region 2

John Willis  
2958 Rouse Road Ext.  
Kinston, NC 28504-7320  
252-520-2402  
[John.Willis@ncagr.gov](mailto:John.Willis@ncagr.gov)  
Region 1



#### Additional Sources of Assistance:

- N.C. Forest Service County Rangers and District Rangers
- County Extension Agents and Master Gardeners
- Private consultants – Wildland Urban Interface Specialists, landscape architects, landscape contractors, consulting arborists, certified arborists
- Volunteers with expertise in your community

Mail or otherwise deliver 2 originals (clearly marked and signed *in BLUE INK* by an authorized representative of the agency or organization applying) (2 total) of the complete proposal package (Application Form, Budget, Project Schedule and Proposal Narrative and any other required forms) to:

**N.C. Community Firewise Grant Program  
North Carolina Forest Service  
Attention: Gary C. Wood**

**Federal Express/UPS Deliveries  
Griffith's Forestry Center  
2411 Old US 70 West  
Clayton, N.C. 27520**

**U.S Mail  
Griffith's Forestry Center  
2411 Old US 70 west  
Clayton, N.C. 27520**

**FAXED PROPOSALS WILL BE REJECTED**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternate means of communication of program information (braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-A, Whitten Building, 14<sup>th</sup> and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.