

**Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
 Division of Forest Resources  
 In Cooperation with the USDA Forest Service**



**Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program**

**Deadline for application submission: 4:00 p.m. April 30, 2021**

**Uniform Notice for Funding Opportunity (NOFO)  
 Summary Information**

	<b>Data Field</b>	
1.	Awarding Agency Name:	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
2.	Agency Contact:	Adrian Walker (Adrian.Walker2@illinois.gov)
3.	Announcement Type:	<input type="checkbox"/> Initial announcement <input type="checkbox"/> Modification of a previous announcement
4.	Type of Assistance Instrument:	Grant
5.	Funding Opportunity Number:	FY2021 VFA
6.	Funding Opportunity Title:	Volunteer Fire Assistance
7.	CSFA Number:	422-20-0094
8.	CSFA Popular Name:	VFA
9.	CFDA Number(s):	10.698
10.	Anticipated Number of Awards:	40
11.	Estimated Total Program Funding:	<b>\$250,000</b>
12.	Award Range	\$0-\$9,999
13.	Source of Funding:	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal or Federal pass-through <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Private / other funding
14.	Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement:	Yes
15.	Indirect Costs Allowed	No
	Restrictions on Indirect Costs	No
16.	Posted Date:	2/11/21
17.	Closing Date for Applications:	4/30/21
18.	Technical Assistance Session:	Session Offered: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Session Mandatory: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Specify date and time N/A Provide link to registration, if applicable N/A

## Agency-specific Content for the Notice of Funding Opportunity

There are now five grantee pre-award requirements statewide per the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) [State Statute 30 ILCS 708/1](#). The five pre-award requirements all state grantees must complete are described in more detail. [Click Here](#)

**Grantee Registration** - **All grantees must register with the State of Illinois.** Grantee registration is completed by accessing, completing and submitting the Grantee Registration form.

**Grantee Pre-qualification** - All entities must be qualified to do business with the State of Illinois. To be qualified for an FFY21 grant award, an entity must:

- have a current DUNS number ([sign up for free](#));
- have a current SAMS Cage# ([sign up for free](#));
- must not be on the [Federal Excluded Parties List](#);
- must not be on the State of Illinois Stop Pay List;
- and be in good standing with the [Illinois Secretary of State](#).

**A. Program Description:** This is the thirty-ninth year for the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) Program. During the last thirty-six years, we have approved approximately 1,550 grants totaling over \$5.7 million to rural fire protection agencies in Illinois. This program provides financial, technical and related assistance for organizing, training and equipping rural fire departments. Funding is passed through to local fire departments and fire training academies. Goals include preventing and suppressing rural fires and enhancing protection capabilities by assisting rural communities at risk in the wild land urban interface.

**Grant Program Administration:** The Office of Resource Conservation's, Division of Forest Resources administers the competitive program. The grant program is governed by Administrative Rule set forth in 17 ILL. Adm. Code 1570, a copy of which can be found at <https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/adrules/Documents/17-1570.pdf>, under Administrative Rules (Adopted), Forestry, Rural Community Fire Protection Program.

**Performance Measures:** The purpose of the VFA is the distribution of funds to eligible applicants on a statewide competitive basis, as determined by need, type of request, project costs, and the capability of the project sponsor (applicant) to fund, utilize, and maintain the project. Additional considerations are included in the project selection process.

## B. Funding Information

**Funding Source:** The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) has been awarded federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Services. This money is part of a national allotment for rural fire protection under the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, as amended by the Forest Stewardship Act of 1990. Payments pursuant to this grant are

subject to the appropriation of adequate funds by the United States Congress. Grant funds are under CFDA 10.698.

**Available Funding:** The funds will be distributed to fire-fighting agencies as a 50/50 reimbursement type grant with a maximum award of \$10,000. **Fire Departments must have funds available for the entire project cost at the time of the application and be able to expend the entire project cost initially and then submit invoices and payment document to the IDNR for 50% reimbursement of the total costs.**

**Allowable Costs:** PPE, Equipment, training and or materials related to Wildland fighting and protection.

**Cost Sharing or Matching:** VFA will reimburse up to 50% of total approved project costs. Any remaining costs over the approved project costs will be borne by the project sponsor. VFA grants are issued as reimbursement grants. This means that a project sponsor must have sufficient cash, donation, or eligible in-kind services to pay for work, and then be paid back for the grant work after approval of a reimbursement request.

**Indirect Cost Rate:** In order to charge indirect costs to a grant, the applicant organization must have an annually negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA). There are three types of NICRAs: a) Federally Negotiated Rate. Organizations that receive direct federal funding may have an indirect cost rate that was negotiated with the Federal Cognizant Agency. Illinois will accept the federally negotiated rate. The organization must provide a copy of the federally NICRA. b) State Negotiated Rate. The organization must negotiate an indirect cost rate with the State of Illinois if they do not have Federally Negotiated Rate or elect to use the De Minimis Rate. The indirect cost rate proposal must be submitted to the State of Illinois within 90 days of the notice of award. c) De Minimis Rate. An organization that has does not have a current a Federally Negotiated Rate may elect a de minimis rate of 10% of Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC). Once established, the de minimis rate may be used indefinitely. The State of Illinois must verify the calculation of the MTDC annually in order to accept the de minimis rate.

## **C. Eligibility Information**

### **Eligible Applicants:**

Eligible recipients are limited to the following entities:

- A single fire department serving a rural area or a rural community with a population of 10,000 or less (latest Census).

- Area fire departments (fire districts, townships, etc.) may serve an aggregate population of greater than 10,000 if the service area of the fire department includes a rural area or a rural community having a population of 10,000 or less. The VFA funding must be used to benefit the rural population.
- A single county or town with a population over 10,000 which is served by two or more fire districts operating entirely within the bounds of the county or town may qualify as long as the service area of a given fire department includes a rural area or a rural community or the population of the fire department's jurisdiction includes a rural area or a rural community or the population of the fire department's jurisdiction is 10,000 or less. The VFA funding must be used for the rural area.
- A single community with a population greater than 10,000 and having a single fire department with one or more fire stations may qualify. The fire department must have a service area that includes a rural area or community that does not exceed 10,000 in population. The VFA funding must be used only for the benefit of the rural population. Similarly, a single community with a population greater than 10,000 which also provides fire protection to an adjoining rural community of 10,000 or less population by contract may also be eligible provided the VFA funding is used entirely to support the rural community.

#### **D. Application and Submission Information**

##### **Application Procedures – Please complete the following items:**

- \*Uniform Application for State Assistance
- \*VFA FY21 Application
- \*Budget Template

**(Follow Link) <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/conservation/Forestry/Pages/default.aspx>**

Grant applications for funding assistance under this program shall be submitted via email to [Adrian.Walker2@illinois.gov](mailto:Adrian.Walker2@illinois.gov). IDNR, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271. **The application deadline is April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 4 p.m. Central Time.** Incomplete applications, unsigned applications, and those received after the application deadline will not be considered by the Department.

**PLEASE INCLUDE WITH YOUR APPLICATION** all detailed information requested. The application is designed to allow the Department to obtain enough information to evaluate the proposed project. If you wish to print the forms and handwrite in your information that is acceptable as well. You can email scanned copies to the email noted above.

#### **E. Application Review Information**

**Project Evaluation and Procedures** – All applications received on time and containing the information required by the application packet will be reviewed by Department staff. All complete, eligible and timely applications will be evaluated by the State Forester and Evaluation

Committee. Evaluation criteria include: whether the program will improve insurance classifications; result in an organization formed under improved fire plans (the formation of fire districts or other legal entities is encouraged); encourage applicant use of all aspects of the program (training, organizing, and equipping); encourage applicant in the development of both structural and rural land fire prevention and suppression. Specific criteria used in the prioritization of projects are: degree of hazard; number of applicants involved; aspects of program used (organization, training and equipment); wildland fire reporting, maximum points 15; effect on insurance rates, maximum points 10; compatibility with state wide rural protection plans, maximum points 10; communications equipment, maximum points 15; lack of tax base, maximum points 10; written memorandum with the IDNR, Division of Forestry, required no points; protection of government land and facilities, maximum points 20; wildland fire protective clothing, equipment and wildland training, maximum points 40; modification of federal excess equipment, maximum points 10; Increasing water supply, maximum points 20; Community wildfire protection plan 10; Each application will receive a numerical score based on the above criteria. A prioritized list will be developed using the applicants' scores.

For best results, prospective grantees should include detailed project descriptions with photographs and maps.

### **Merit-based Review Appeals Process**

In compliance with GATA, applicants have the right to appeal the evaluation process but not the evaluation score. More information is available at:

<http://ilga.gov/commission/JCAR/admincode/044/044070000D03500R.html>

### **Examples of Eligible Projects/Past funded projects:**

Training: 1) Training materials, tuition, instructor fees. 2) Training classes (tuition fees, class books, classroom materials/fees)

Equipment: IDNR will cost-share on any of the following items of equipment. Equipment items not appearing on this list, but needed by a fire agency, may be eligible. **No one item may exceed \$4,999.**

Protective Clothing: Coat, pants, helmet, gloves, boots; Nomex pants and shirt (for wildfire suppression); Air Pack (complete); Air Cylinder; Pressure Demand Mask

Equipment: Skid/Slip-on pumper unit; portable tank; pump; Hoses (1" Forestry, 1 3/4" w/couplings, 2 1/2 " w/couplings, 1" with couplings, hard suction with couplings, soft suction with couplings); Nozzle; Fan-Exhaust; Generator; Siren, light bar & speaker; Dry hydrant (materials & labor) on private property requires a 30 year easement to be submitted with the application.; Groundcover tools (chainsaw, backpack blower, backpack pump, fire broom, flapper, etc.)

Communication: High-Band based, installed with antenna; High-Band mobile, installed with antenna; High-Band portable; pagers

Establishment of New Fire Organizations: Expenses related to the organization of a new fire agency (legal expenses, filing fees, incorporation fees)

### **Examples of Ineligible Projects:**

The purchase, construction or renovation of capital improvements such as fire stations or pressurized water systems; The purchase of new fire trucks, televisions, computers, or audio-visual projection equipment; Rescue, hazmat or EMS equipment.

If you have any questions or need assistance with a grant application, please email [Adrian.Walker2@illinois.gov](mailto:Adrian.Walker2@illinois.gov) or call 217-524-9628.

## **F. Award Administration Information**

### State Award Notice

Once a final decision has been made, the successful applicant will be notified by email and/or letter of any final requirements before the state grant can be awarded to them. Once all the final requirements have been completed, the Grant Agreement between IDNR and the applicant will be sent for the applicant to sign and return. Once the agreement is fully executed by the IDNR a copy will be returned to the applicant.

Only after the Grant Agreement has been signed by the Director can expenses be incurred for grant reimbursement. Any expenses incurred outside of the grant period (before or after) are at the applicant's risk and are not eligible either as match or for reimbursement related to the grant unless a waiver has been previously issued.

Successful grantees must **sign** the standard **Illinois Grant Agreement upon execution**.

### Administrative and National Policy Requirements

The **Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA)**, 30 ILCS 708/1 *et seq.* is the Administrative Code that this grant will be governed under.

### Reporting

Financial reporting will include all funds including matching funds spent in the undertaking of the project and interest earned on advanced payments. Various types of reporting are required for grant agreements awarded under this grant, including:

#### Performance Reporting:

*Final Performance Report:* The grantee shall submit a written Final Performance Report to the department accompanied with the final billing. Documents should include:

- Grant Agreement number
- Grantee name

- Report date
- Cost breakdown of completed project components
- Signature and title of person completing report

#### **G. State Awarding Agency Contact(s)**

To contact the IDNR with questions related to this grant, please use the following means:

By US Mail:

IL Dept. of Natural Resources (ATTN: Adrian Walker)

One Natural Resources Way

Springfield, IL 62702

e-mail: [adrian.walker2@illinois.gov](mailto:adrian.walker2@illinois.gov)

phone: 217.524.9628

#### **H. Other Information, if applicable**

More information can be found at IDNR's website:

<https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/grants/Pages/default.aspx>

The State of Illinois is not obligated to make any award of the Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program as a result of this Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Only the Director of Natural Resources makes the determination of what grants shall be awarded after considering the recommendations. Grant applicants are not authorized to proceed on their projects until the Director has signed the Grant Agreement.