

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



**Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program**

**Application Package**

**Deadline for application submission: 3:00 P.M. July 31, 2015**

Bruce Rauner  
*Governor*

Wayne A. Rosenthal  
*Director*

Updated March 11, 2015  
Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois  
DNR TTY number (217) 782-9175  
Relay number (800) 526-0844



# Illinois Department of Natural Resources

One Natural Resources Way Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271  
<http://dnr.state.il.us>

Pat Quinn, Governor  
Marc Miller, Director

May 1, 2015

RE: Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program Financial Assistance

Dear Applicant:

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) has been awarded federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service. 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. The funds will be distributed to fire fighting agencies as a 50-50 reimbursement type grant with a maximum award of \$10,000.00. ***Fire Departments must have funds available for the entire project cost at the time of application and be able to expend the entire project cost initially and then submit invoices and payment documentation to IDNR for 50% reimbursement of the total costs.***

This is the thirty-sixth year for the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) Grant Program. During the last thirty-five years, we have approved approximately 1,523 grants totaling over \$5,500,000 to rural fire protection agencies in Illinois.

Enclosed please find a copy of the Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program Application along with enclosures explaining program guidelines and requirements.

Since the VFA grants are competitive, it is imperative that you take prompt action to complete and return one copy of the application to the address shown in this packet. Applications for evaluation and funding consideration must be received in the IDNR Springfield Office by **3:00PM July 31, 2015**. Established scoring guidelines will be utilized to evaluate all grant applications.

**All successful applicants will be required to sign a formal agreement with the IDNR. If awarded a grant, no purchases may be incurred prior to the grant agreement being fully approved and executed by both the qualifying fire agency and the IDNR.**

If you have any questions concerning this program, please call Tom Wilson at 618/498-1627 Office 618/444-0572 cell or by email at [tom.wilson@illinois.gov](mailto:tom.wilson@illinois.gov).

Sincerely,

Tom Wilson, CF  
Forest Protection Program Manager  
Division of Forestry  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
One Natural Resources Way  
Springfield, IL 62702  
618/498-1627 office  
618/444-0572 cell

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Section I - General Information</b> .....	1-3
Program Description .....	1
Who Administers the Grant Program.....	1
Who is Eligible to Receive a Grant.....	1
Who is Not Eligible to Receive a Grant.....	1
What Kinds of Projects are Eligible for Grants .....	2
Training .....	2
Equipment.....	2
Organization .....	2
What Kinds of Projects are Ineligible for Grants.....	3
Financial Requirements .....	3
<b>Section II – Grant Application and Evaluation Process</b> .....	3
How and When to Apply for a Grant.....	3
How are Applications Evaluated .....	3
<b>Section III - Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Compliance Requirements</b> .....	4-5
The Grant Agreement.....	4
Acknowledgement of Funds Source.....	4
Financial Management .....	4
Inspection and Auditing of Projects .....	5
<b>Section IV – Application Instructions</b> .....	5-6
<b>Section V Appendix</b> .....	i – vii
Application.....	i – iv
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).....	v
Fire Report .....	vi
Reimbursement Form Example .....	vii

**VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM**  
**SECTION I – GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Program Description**

The Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program utilizes federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Forest Service as 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. The funds are intended to assist State Foresters to organize, train and equip local firefighting forces for fire protection in rural areas and communities with a total population of 10,000 persons or less.

**Who Administers the Grant Program**

The Office of Resource Conservation’s Division of Forest Resources administers the competitive grant 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 [www.dnr.state.il.us/legal](http://www.dnr.state.il.us/legal), under Adopted Administrative Rules, Forestry, Rural Community Fire Protection Program.

**Who is Eligible to Receive a Grant**

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 as long as 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 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.

**Who is NOT Eligible to Receive a Grant**

A single community fire department serving a population greater than 10,000 and not providing protection to a rural area or to a rural community is **NOT ELIGIBLE** for VFA financial assistance.

Fire Departments not having the funds available for the entire project cost at the time of application are **NOT ELIGIBLE** to apply for assistance.

Highway right-of ways, City Buildings or City Parks, Community Centers, Schools, Churches, Cemeteries and/or Post Offices, and Mutual Aid assistance are **NOT ELIGIBLE** for consideration.

## **What Kinds of Projects are Eligible for Grants**

Eligible projects are limited to those projects that assist volunteer rural fire departments through training, equipment and organization. Examples of past funded projects include:

### **Training**

- Training materials, tuition, instructor fees
- Training classes (tuition fees, class books, classroom materials/fees)

### **Equipment**

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (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: for questions concerning eligibility, contact Tom Wilson, Forest Protection Program Manager, to discuss.

**No one item may exceed \$4,999.**

- Protective Clothing
  - Coat, pant, 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.)
- Communications
  - High-Band base, 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

## **What Kinds of Projects are Ineligible for Grants**

Projects that are ineligible for VFA grants include:

### **No one item may exceed \$4,999.00.**

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

## **Financial Requirements**

This is a competitive program where the grantee is required to provide a minimum of 50% of the total cost of the project. In-kind matches are eligible; i.e. labor, fair market materials and other pre-approved supplies or equipment. In-kind matches must be documented with time sheets, equipment use rates, etc. Invoices, canceled checks and completed reimbursement form are required for reimbursement.

## **SECTION II – GRANT APPLICATION AND EVALUATION PROCESS**

### **How and When to Apply for a Grant**

To receive a grant from the Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program, an applicant must submit detailed information on their proposal. To aid in presenting this information, the Department has provided an application form with general instructions for completion. This form is designed to allow the Department to obtain enough information to evaluate the proposed project. The application form is in Section V.

The applicant must provide all information requested on the application. Incomplete applications will be returned to the applicant for completion and re-submittal. Submitting an incomplete application does not extend the application deadline date. One (1) original application with supporting documentation and legally authorized signature needs to be submitted. No electronic or facsimile applications will be accepted.

The application deadline is **3:00 pm July 31, 2015** at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources office located at One Natural Resources Way Springfield, IL 62702-1271.

### **How are Applications Evaluated**

All applications received on time and containing the required information are reviewed and prioritized by the State Forester, according to the following criteria: 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); effect on insurance rates; compatibility with state wide rural protection plans; communications equipment; lack of tax base; written memorandum with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forest Resources; definite training plans; protection of government land and facilities; protective clothing and equipment; modification of Federal Excess equipment; ground cover tools and equipment; and catastrophic loss. *Applicants who received prior year funding from the VFA grant program and have not yet submitted their reimbursement package to IDNR will receive penalty points on this grant program application.* Each application will receive a numerical score based on the above

criteria. A prioritized list will be developed using the applicants' scores.

The State Forester will forward to the Director of the Department of Natural Resources all applications and the prioritized list of all projects deemed to be consistent with the purposes of the Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program. The Director will determine which grants will be awarded after considering the recommendations of the State Forester. All applicants will be notified of the Director's decision. An additional list of potential "alternate awards" will be developed. If any awards are declined, or an entire award is not used, then the prioritized alternate list will be utilized to award additional grants.

### **SECTION III – VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSISTANCE GRANT COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS**

#### **The Grant Agreement**

When a grant has been awarded, the grantee and the Director of the Department, or the Director's designee on behalf of the Department, shall execute a legally binding Grant Agreement. In order for costs to be eligible for funding ***the project must not be initiated and costs shall not be incurred prior to the time the Department and grantee sign the grant agreement.*** The agreement will state the legal authority pursuant to which the agreement is made as well as identify the project scope, schedule and the work or services to be performed or conducted by the grantee. The agreement will clearly state the amount of the grant and the condition and manner by which the Department shall pay the grant amount.

The agreement will also act as the **irrevocable promise by the grantee to fully fund the project** (and receive a maximum of 50% reimbursement of the total project cost). The grantee further promises in the agreement to expend the grant award only for the purposes of the project as stated in the application and approved by the Department.

Grant funds for projects approved through the Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program may be made available for expenditure by a grantee for a period no longer than 2 years, except where such grant funds are disbursed in reimbursement of costs previously incurred by the grantee before the grant expired.

#### **Acknowledgment of Funding Source**

The grantee shall give proper credit to the US Forest Service Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program and coordinate with the Department on any publication, written document, news article, television and radio release, interview or personal presentation, if initiated by the grantee, which refers to the project.

#### **Financial Management**

The grantee shall keep adequate records relating to its administration of a project, particularly relating to all incurred costs. All assets acquired through the Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program shall be accounted for. These records shall be available for audit by appropriate state and federal personnel. All records shall be retained in accordance with State laws.

Request for reimbursement of any expenditure that does not comply with the grant agreement shall be disallowed. Whenever a grantee violates this Part, it shall be ineligible for further assistance under this program for a period of 2 years.

Requests for reimbursements shall be made with the provided forms (example: appendix vii). All invoices (statements are not acceptable) are to be included along with copies of canceled checks. Requests for payments using in-kind services will be documented showing names and addresses of personnel, hourly rates, types of equipment and hourly rates for equipment, and any other pre-approved activities. Examples of in-kind service are: time spent in fire training classes by fire personnel, backhoe work to install a dry hydrant, etc. **Reimbursement for items purchased prior to grant execution by all parties will be disallowed.**

### **Inspection and Auditing of Projects**

*The Grantee shall permit the Department, the Auditor General or the Attorney General to inspect and audit any books, records, or papers related to the program, project, or use for which grant funds were provided. The Department shall be authorized to enter and cross properties affected by the Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program to inspect progress and monitor grantee compliance, in accordance with the authorities granted it through the Civil Administrative Code of Illinois [20 ILCS 805/805-530].*

Department personnel will use a standardized inspection report when inspecting any project site. The inspection report shall become part of the public record.

## **SECTION IV – APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

This Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program Application Form can be used to apply for grants from the Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program. **All fields shown as required must be completed and all requested attachments must be included with the application to be considered complete.** Please type or legibly print application in black ink.

### **Section 1 - Applicant Information**

- List the name and other required information for the organization that will be receiving the grant. The Applicant Representative is the person completing the application and authorized to sign for the applicant. ***One (1) application with an original signature is required.***
- **If the fire department seeking funding is using the federal Taxpayer Identification Number of a City or Village, list the City or Village as the Applicant and in parenthesis list the volunteer fire department name.**
- Other Contact Person is for the name and other requested information of the person to be contacted regarding any questions about the application if the contact person is different from the Applicant Representative.
- **Please make sure you list a Day time phone number for your Contact Person.**

### **Section 2 - Eligibility**

Questions 1- 4 are required to receive a grant. Applicant must have at the time of application, 100% of the total project costs available as indicated in Section 5, Budget Summary. List the source of project funds.

### **Section 3 - Evaluation Criteria**

These questions will be used to determine the prioritized ranking of the applications. *Applicants who received prior year funding from the VFA grant program and have not yet submitted their reimbursement package to IDNR will receive penalty points on this grant program application*

### **Section 4 - Project Description**

- Check the classification that most describes your project and provide a project title.
- Describe and justify the project concisely and completely. The project objectives should be clearly stated and

must be within the scope of the grant program to be considered.

**Equipment Purchase:** Competitive bidding should be used whenever possible.

**Training:** Describe the requested training, include training agency (examples include Illinois Fire Service Institute, U.S. Fire Administration & National Wildfire Coordination Group). Only fire training is eligible; Hazmat, rescue, etc. are not eligible.

**Organization:** Describe the process of forming the fire organization. Include personnel involved, legal description, location, political boundaries and communities served.

**Section 5 - Budget Summary** *(Please round all figures.)*

- Provide a summary of the Detailed Budget (page iv) according to budget category. For each category, identify which expenditure will come from grant funds and which will be provided by matching funds. The Project Total must equal the Total Cost of Project on the Detailed Budget.
- List the source and amount of any matching funds that will be contributed to the project.
- In-kind (non-cash) contributions will be allowed as part of the applicant's matching funds.

**Section 6 - Detailed Budget** *(Required for all applications.)*

List all projected expenditures associated with the project, broken down into the categories of personnel, travel, equipment, materials/supplies, contractual services or other. List the description, unit cost, quantity and total. The total for each budget category is to be reflected under Section 5, Budget Summary, on page (iii) of the application.

**Attachments** (Check all applicable attachments)

- One copy of the application and associated attachments are required.
- Provide all attachments requested.

**APPLICATION DEADLINE**

Project applications are to be received via mail or in the main lobby of the Department of Natural Resources Office no later than **3:00 PM on July 31, 2015.**

Mail applications to: Debbie Dix  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
Office of Resource Conservation- Division of Forest Resources  
Volunteer Fire Assistance Grants  
One Natural Resources Way  
Springfield, IL 62702-1271

**Return all pages of the application form;** include all maps and easements if required. Applications submitted electronically or by facsimile will not be accepted. Applications that are not signed will be returned.

**QUESTIONS**

Any questions regarding the Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Program or completing the Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Application Form should be directed to the Office of Resource Conservation – Division of Forestry at 618/498-1627 office 618/444-0572 cell, or by e-mail address to: [tom.wilson@illinois.gov](mailto:tom.wilson@illinois.gov).