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STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY
MAINE FOREST SERVICE
22 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0022

WALTER E. WHITCOMB
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August 2, 2016

**VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (VFA)
FUNDS AVAILABLE Application
deadline: November 18, 2016**

The Forest Protection Division, a division of the Maine Forest Service, Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry in cooperation with the United States Forest Service and the Forestry Committee of the Maine Fire Chief's Association is pleased to announce that applications for the VFA cost share grant program are currently being accepted for the FY2017 VFA program.

What is the purpose of the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program?

The purpose of the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) program, formerly known as the Rural Community Fire Protection (RCFP) program, is to provide Federal financial, technical and other assistance to state foresters and other appropriate officials to organize, train, and equip fire departments in rural areas and rural communities to prevent and suppress fires. A rural community is defined as having 10,000 or less population. This 10,000 population limit for participation in the VFA program is meant to ensure that distribution of available VFA funding to fire departments most in need of financial assistance.

Eligibility: Below are the eligibility criteria for application to the VFA program.

1. A single fire department serving a rural area or a rural community with a population of 10,000 or less is eligible (view 2010 municipality population at: <http://www.maine.gov/economist/census>).
2. 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 exclusively serves a rural area or community that does not exceed 10,000 population. The VFA funding must be used only for the benefit of that 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.
3. 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.
4. ***Fire Departments must be NIMS compliant.*** NIMS compliance information can be found at <http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims> or at <http://www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/attach.php?id=42762&an=1>

Application Deadline: The application deadline is **November 18, 2016**. All applications must have been postmarked or received at the Forest Protection Division Office, 22 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0022 (physical location is 18 Elkins Lane, Harlow Building, 3rd Floor, Augusta, ME 04333) by that date. Any application postmarked after that date will not be considered.

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Highlights of the Volunteer Fire Assistance 2017 Grant Program:

1. The following items or functions are eligible: a) wildland fire personal protective equipment, b) pumps and associated equipment used in wildland fire suppression, c) Class A Foam d) equipment for foam application, e) hand or power tools used in wildland fire suppression, f) portable radios and pagers, g) dry hydrants and cisterns (please note the match from this grant must be < \$1500 per hydrant for organized towns and <\$3000 per hydrant for unorganized towns and plantations), h) hose used for wildland fire suppression, i) nozzles used for wildland fire suppression, j) other equipment used for wildland fire suppression or pre-suppression.
2. ***Priority will be given to wildland fire personal protective equipment, pumps, foam, wildland fire hose and hand tools.***
3. No single piece of equipment shall exceed \$4,999.00 in cost. This is a 50/50 matching grant. **The maximum amount of grant funds per applicant is \$5,000.00.** Local contribution may exceed the match requirement, (e.g. \$5,000 grant funds + \$7,000 local fund = \$12,000 total project costs).

Program Guidelines:

1. The application must be signed by an authorized representative of the fire department / municipality.
2. Applications must be technically consistent and complete.
3. Applications for more than \$5,000 in grant funds will not be considered. Grant funds must be matched with an equal amount of local funds (\$5,000 grant funds + \$5,000 matching funds = \$10,000 project).
4. No single item may cost more than \$4,999.00.
5. **Due to federal programmatic changes, the state does not currently have the ability to order items through the GSA program.**
6. Final selections will be made by December 16, 2016. **Projects must be completed by JUNE 30, 2017.** Project extensions may be granted by the Director of the Forest Protection Division for extenuating circumstances. **Projects and final reports not completed by June 30, 2017 may be terminated.**
7. Signed “*agreement*” and “*assurance*” forms must be completed, and returned to the program coordinator within 60 days of notice of award. **If these documents are not received by this date, the award may be terminated and funds reallocated.**
8. Funds will be reimbursed only when the project has been satisfactorily completed and final reports received and approved.
9. **The VFA grant is administered as a reimbursement grant.** Proper documentation to support a reimbursement request includes copies of invoices (quotes and/or statements are not acceptable) **and** town warrants and/or canceled checks as evidence that approved items have been purchased and paid for.

Requests For Funding will NOT be Considered for:

1. any single item costing more than \$4,999.00.
2. repair or construction of buildings.
3. land acquisition.
4. water lines and hydrants (*except for dry-hydrants* with the limitations listed above)
5. the rehabilitation of existing dry-hydrants.
6. vehicles.
7. hose over 2 ½” (*unless justified in the grant application narrative*).
8. PTO pumps.
9. generators.
10. boots.
11. any equipment not related to wildland fire suppression or pre-suppression.

12. routine operating supplies or expenses.
13. base station radios, repeaters, antennas, radio towers, etc..
14. any portable radio, or pager costing more than \$500 per unit or any radio which is not narrowband compliant.
15. Chainsaws costing more than \$500 per unit.
16. more than four portable radios and /or pagers per applicant.
17. Cellular phones.
18. Class A foam costing more than \$90 for a five gallon pail.

Matching Funds Guidelines:

1. Minimum match is 50% of the total project cost.
2. Applicants must match grant funds with cash on an equal cost share basis.

Selection Criteria:

1. Applications will be evaluated and selected by members of the Division of Forest Protection and the Maine Fire Chief's Association's Forestry Committee. All projects must demonstrate that equipment will be used in wildland fire suppression.

To request an application, or assistance with completing the application, visit www.maineforestservice.gov or call Kent Nelson at 207-287-4989.