

April 21, 2015.

**CAL FIRE Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) Program  
Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) Grants**

**Questions and Answers**

*Note: This document will be regularly updated with new questions and the corresponding answers as they are received.*

**Q Can the project application budget be modified from the budget submitted with the concept proposal?**

A Yes, the budget submitted with the project application can be modified from the budget submitted in the concept proposal.

**Q Are State agencies eligible for GGRF grants?**

A State agencies are not eligible for U&CF GGRF grants.

**Q Do you have a preferred scientific methodology to quantify the GHG emission reductions for your fuel reduction grants?**

A We do not have a preferred methodology. We have offered some guidance on the website and hope to have additional guidance posted on the web during the project application period. We are working with the Air Resources Board on acceptable methodologies.

**Q Is there a cost share or match share requirement for the U&CF GGRF grant programs?**

A No. There is a suggested matching rate of 25%, which can be either funds, or in kind.

**Q Is a high school district considered a public agency?**

A Public Schools are public agencies.

**Q Will there be another grant application period in the future?**

A CAL FIRE has been identified to receive funding in the FY 2015/16 Governor's Budget. There will be no certainty on receiving this funding until the budget is signed. All information on future funding opportunities will be on CAL FIRE's Grant website <http://www.fire.ca.gov/grants/grants.php>.

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**Q Can a Federal agency apply for U&CF GGRF funds?**

A No. Eligible grantees for U&CF GGRF grants may be cities, counties, special districts, or nonprofit organizations. Per the Public Resources Code, Section 30910 (c) "Nonprofit organization" means any California corporation organized under Section 501(c)(3) of the federal Internal Revenue Code. "

**Q Is there a cap on the amount of indirect costs a grant can have in the budget?**

A The indirect rate is capped at 10% of the direct cost of the grant (excluding direct cost related to equipment purchases).

**Q Are implementation projects preferable over feasibility studies?**

A Yes, projects with a tangible GHG benefit are preferable.

**Q Is CEQA always required for these projects or can NEPA substitute?**

A NEPA can substitute if the conditions in [14 CCR §15221](#) are satisfied.

**Q When does the project need to be completed by?**

A If your project is selected for funding, it must be completed by the Project Completion Date identified in your Project Application or December 31, 2019, whichever is earlier. Under no circumstances will the project be awarded for a period beyond December 31, 2019.

**Q Would applying for two or more UCF GGRF grants from different categories at the same time negate our applications?**

A Applying for multiple grant categories at the same time would not negate the applications. However, it is expected that you would not enter into an additional grant agreement for the same portions of the same project. If portions of the project were split, grants could be obtained from different sources for the split portions, not to exceed 100% of the project value. Attempts to bill two grants for the same work within a project would likely result in legal action by the State against the applicant.

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**Q Why wasn't my U&CF GGRF Grant Project invited to submit a project application?**

A There are many possible reasons. Keep in mind that there was over \$107 million in requests received in concept proposals. There is only \$15.7 million that will be awarded. Not being invited back is by no means an indictment of a project not having merit. Only the very highest scoring projects have been invited back. A few possible reasons projects may not have been invited back:

- The concept proposal was received late or was not completely filled out.
- The project did not adequately demonstrate that it would achieve benefits, like GHG reductions, energy savings, public health benefits, etc. of significance commensurate with the budget request.
- The project was not in or would not serve a disadvantaged community as defined by Cal Enviro Screen 2.0 and Air Resources Board Guidance.
- The project did not demonstrate meaningful partnerships.
- The project did not demonstrate it would utilize best management practices.
- The project did not demonstrate community engagement or a plan to engage the community.

**Q We were not invited back for a project application. What areas did we score poorly in?**

A Your Regional Urban Forester will be available to discuss your concept proposal and how it could be improved for future potential grant offerings.

**Q What methods should Management Activities project applications use to demonstrate GHG reductions?**

A It is recommended that these kinds of projects include a tree planting component at this time. Further guidance on GHG methods will be provided when we have finished working with the Air Resources Board on acceptable methodologies.

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**Q Out of the 169 concept proposals, how many were invited to submit project applications?**

A There are 62 concept proposals that were selected to provide project applications.

**Q How will project proposals be selected for funding?**

A All the criteria used to determine grant awards are listed in the grant category RFP and the Procedural guide that is common to all the grant categories.

**Q How can we improve upon our concept proposal for submitting our project application?**

A There are a number of ways to improve upon concept proposals. All of them involve providing more project specifics. Some examples:

- Improved and/or more detailed GHG methods that are verifiable and defensible. CAL FIRE will provide further guidance as additional information becomes available from the Air Resources Board.
- Detailed planting location information, and/or specific information on how sites will be chosen.
- Detailed planting palette that takes into account site specific issues and concerns, as well as overall urban forest population concerns.
- Specific commitments by identified project partners to participate in the project (letters of commitment are a way to do this).
- Providing more urban forest related benefits for the cost.
- Providing a detailed budget in the form provided that uses actual price quotes or thorough estimates that are explained in the budget explanation.
- Demonstrating a clear and technically sound plan for plant and/or tree planting and establishment care.
- Detailing how long term maintenance of the project will be achieved with a high degree of certainty.
- Clearly showing that the community the project will serve has been engaged and are in support of and will be able to participate in the project.
- Clearly stating that the priorities and goals stated in the grant category RFP will be met, and how that will be accomplished.

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**Q Do we need a separate governing body resolution for each grant application if we are submitting more than one project application?**

A Yes. Each project is treated separately in this regard.

**Q Sign guidelines are mentioned in the Procedural Guide. Where do I find the sign guidelines?**

A The sign guidelines will be provided to grantees after grants are awarded.

**Q What is required to prove that my project is in or serving a CalEnviroScreen 2.0 census tract or census tracts?**

A For projects that will be in disadvantaged communities, a map showing the CES 2.0 tracts that the project will be in is preferable, though a listing of the tracts by tract number will suffice. For how projects will serve a CES 2.0 census tract or tracts, project applicants will need to demonstrate that they will meet the ARB guidance on serving disadvantaged communities. Please refer to the ARB guidance on this issue which can be linked from the CAL FIRE U&CF Grants web page.

**Q Are Urban and Community Forestry grant projects subject to the ARB or CAR Urban Forestry Project Protocols?**

A No. Urban and Community Forestry GGRF Grants projects are not subject to these protocols.

**Q Will we be able to apply and qualify for CAL FIRE Urban and Community Forestry GGRF funding in a future grant year if we receive funding in this one?**

A If CAL FIRE receives funding for U&CF projects from the GGRF in future years, having received such funds this year would not preclude an organization from applying for or being awarded funding in those potential future years.

**Q Please clarify the following statement in the February 25 letter (bottom of page 1): “The actual carbon (metric tonnes) sequestered or emissions avoided by the project will be considered within the scope of the project size.”**

A The statement should be interpreted literally. All GGRF funded grants must show a direct GHG reduction benefit as a result of implementing the project.

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**Q Page 2 of our notification letter says we are to submit one digital and one hard copy of our application. The digital copy is not to be scanned. How do we provide the needed signatures without printing out the pages, signing them, and then scanning those pages?**

A The project application form is the primary document we need electronically - unscanned. It need not be signed for the digital copy. All of the other forms/attachments may be scanned for submittal. Everything submitted with the hard copy should be originals with wet signatures.

**Q On page 10 of the updated Procedural Guide we are told to submit three paper copies and one electronic copy of all documents. Since you also mentioned submitting only one paper and one electronic copy in the letter, I assume that is what we should do.**

A That is correct. Project applicants need only submit the one hard copy, and one digital copy. The Procedural Guide has a mistake in it on this issue. The procedural guide will be updated on this issue.

**Q We plan on having three partners who will each supply sites, and each will maintain the trees on the sites. The application has room for only one person to sign to indicate responsibility for maintenance. How do you wish us to handle this?**

A Project applicants can submit letters from the other two partners assuring the same performance as in the maintenance certification in the project application.

**Q The webinar for the Concept Proposal advised us to use default settings when using the Tree Carbon Calculator. We were to use the default settings for shade, azimuth, distance, age of building, and heating. Are we supposed to do that again, or are we to calculate each tree's settings and thus create hundreds of spreadsheets?**

A For project proposals, it is preferable to be as detailed as possible for a project's GHG estimation. To the degree that a project applicant can be species and location specific, they should. A project applicant need not do a calculation for each tree, but it would be reasonable to do one for each species used, and then multiply that by the number of that species to be planted.

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**Q The application asks us to list the minimum planting stock and site size for each species. Will it be sufficient if we simply say something like: "All the trees of Species A will be planted within a space of at least x number of feet between trees? All trees of Species B will be planted with at least y number of feet between trees"? In short, should we indicate the minimum site size and spacing being allowed for each tree of each species?**

A Yes. CAL FIRE wants to know that trees are being planted in sites that will support them long term, and with appropriate spacing for the mature size of the trees being planted.

**Q Is using the Tree Carbon Calculator enough to satisfy requirements for acceptable tracking of GHG? Do we need to do anything besides calculate the GHG figures and track the health of the trees?**

A For tree planting projects, this is the preferred tool. Projects awarded grant funding will be expected to report on the GHG benefits as work occurs per the project reporting requirements in the procedural guide.

**Q Do we need approved CEQA documents to be submitted with the application or before the tree planting begins?**

A CAL FIRE does not require that any CEQA documents be provided with the project application. We do require that any such existing documents be identified to us in the project application or the environmental checklist, and that the environmental checklist be completed and submitted as an attachment to the project application. Further analysis may be required of projects once CAL FIRE has revised the environmental checklist and made a determination.

**Q When will the grants be awarded?**

A CAL FIRE intends to award grants by the end of June 2015.

**Q Can we spend the matching funds that are listed in the grant application budget before the award?**

A No. Matching expenditures must occur during the grant performance period in order to qualify as matching.

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**Q In regards to extended maintenance beyond the end of the performance period. Can we assume that extended maintenance costs should not be included in the project application? What will be the process for obtaining funding through for an extended maintenance fund?**

A Extended maintenance costs must be included in the budget at this point in order for them to be eligible for reimbursement at the end of the project. These funds will only be reimbursed once a final inspection of the grant project has found the project successful, and a plan as to how and when the funds will be spent to maintain the project is in place with CAL FIRE.

**Q Will I be disqualified if I cannot get my governing board resolution voted on and notarized (non-profits only) by the due date (April 30)?**

A No. Applicants may provide a copy of the draft resolution and a letter stating when the resolution is scheduled for a vote and when the completed resolution can be provided to CAL FIRE.

**Q Do I have to do a separate carbon calculation for each species and each year for the 40 year period that calculations are required for?**

A No. You need only to show the most accurate 40 year carbon quantification of each of the species you intend to plant. Be sure to use the most accurate information possible for each species.

**Q Should I submit letters of support for my project?**

A No. Letters of support will not be considered. Only letters from identified project partners that confirm their participation in the project are useful.

**Q As a non-profit doing a tree planting project where the city will take over maintenance after the grant period, Who should sign the Maintenance Certification in 7A on the project application form?**

A The grantee will still need to be the one to sign this since it covers the auditable period after the grant. Essentially, in the eyes of the State, the grantee is responsible for the trees until after the grant audit period. It is still encouraged to state in the grant narrative which entity will ultimately be responsible for the maintenance of the trees after the audit period. A letter of commitment or participation from the city would also be considered helpful in this case.

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**Q Are we allowed to change the locations we wish to plant from the ones listed in our concept proposal, to different locations in the project application?**

A Yes. Location of plantings may be changed to other locations, though they must still be in or serving DACs and still must be in urban areas.

**Q What maps should be attached to the application?**

A Maps will vary based on the project. They may be a site map, boundary map, street map, or vicinity map. Project applicants should choose to submit the map or maps they feel will best convey the extent and scale of their project.

**Q Can a Joint Powers Authority be utilized to carry out work on a grant project?**

A Yes. Work can be carried out by subcontractors of the grantee's choosing.

**Q For acquisition projects, can the obligations of a grant agreement be transferred to another party if the other party is taking ownership of the parcel in fee?**

A No. The grantee is the entity that has the agreement with CAL FIRE.

**Q How can we budget for our partner organization's expenses? Would it be better to add them as a "contractual" cost or to budget them within each line item?**

A Partnering organizations are generally considered to be subcontractors. Categorizing their costs as contractual is one acceptable way to budget them.

**Q Are replacement trees an eligible cost in grant budgets as a percentage of total trees we intend to plant, or would we have to replace trees at our own expense?**

A CAL FIRE does allow budgeting for replacement trees, though the level of such budgeting can be a competitive consideration. If CAL FIRE tree specifications are followed, and tree establishment BMPs are followed, there should be minimal need for replacement trees.

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**Q If we provide a tree list in our project application, is it able to be changed during the project if local jurisdiction's requirements change, or the tree species is not available at nurseries?**

A Yes, tree species can be adjusted during a grant with approval from the CAL FIRE Regional Urban Forester assigned to the grant. It should be noted that changes must be for similar sized species or larger so that the projected GHG benefits (and other benefits) are not reduced.

**Q Is there a template for project signs as mentioned in the Procedural Guide?**

A At this time there is not. In general, the signage will need to recognize the funding source (GGRF), as well as the funding agency and program (CAL FIRE Urban and Community Forestry Program). Normally, signage also recognizes the local project partners that are carrying out the project. It remains to be seen if there will be a logo required for the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. If there is, it would need to be incorporated.

**Q Does signage for the project have to be permanent signage?**

A This depends on the project. If the project has only one or a few fixed locations, then yes, the signage should be permanent like a street sign or similar. If the locations are more dispersed, then semi-permanent signage (banners, stickers, etc.) may be more appropriate.

**Q The Project Proposal asks applicants to stipulate the percentage of recyclable materials in 7C Recycling Certification. How are we to determine the percentage to indicate?**

A This determination is based on the supplies that are used for the project. Generally, this is primarily for items like office supplies and publications.

**Q We are concerned about planting trees during the current drought. Should we be planting trees during a drought?**

A Planting trees in urban areas is a long term strategy to enhance climate resilience of urban areas and sequester carbon. Trees require little water for establishment, especially when selected appropriately. A young tree, planted during the cooler months, only requires 5-10 gallons of water per week (at most) during the warm months for establishment. This can be done with highly efficient irrigation techniques, like drip irrigation, or with hand watering. Trees are very low water users, and ultimately will help make urban landscapes more resilient to future droughts.

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**Q If we are going to send in our project application using a method other than the US Postal Service, what address can we ship it to?**

**A CAL FIRE  
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