Grants Portal
FAQ

System Go-Live

1. When will Grants Portal Go-Live?
   CAL FIRE has not set an updated Go-Live date as of yet. The date is contingent upon CAL FIRE being able to verify the accuracy of migrated data, input supplemental data, test system functionality and finalization of user guides.

2. After the system goes live, will a training for brand new grantees be provided? Will this training be ongoing if the software evolves?
   CAL FIRE and/or eCivis will always notify grantees of any updates to system functionality or processes. Training recordings and user guides will be made available on our webpage at https://www.fire.ca.gov/grants/. If additional training is needed, grantees can always contact Region or CALFIRE.Grants@fire.ca.gov for assistance.

3. Are we supposed to use this portal for our October report?
   You will continue submitting your reports in the same manner until you have been notified that we have gone live in the system.

System Account Access

1. Has the invitation email to access Grants Portal already been sent?
   No, the invitation email has not yet been sent out to grantees. We will send out an email as well as update our webpage once we are able to confirm a date on when award access invitations will be sent.

2. Do we only want one eCivis account for our organization or should each person involved in reporting have an account?
   There will be a primary person, typically the Project Manager, associated with your grant award that will receive the initial invitation to the Grants Portal account. That primary person will be the designated Grant Award Owner. The invitation will come from support@ecivis.com once we go-live, so make sure to check your spam folder if you do not see the invitation in your email inbox.

   The grant award Owner may invite additional people to access and manage the grant award on their behalf. Each person involved will then be able to have their own login credentials. If the primary person does not receive the invitation after being notified of the Go-Live date or the primary person for your grant needs to be updated, please notify us at CALFIRE.Grants@fire.ca.gov.

3. If you add someone to "Manage Project Team" do they see everything the same as you? Can they submit/do the same tasks or are they in a restricted view?
All individuals invited to the project team will have the same permissions to view their grant award and complete tasks as the Grant Award Owner that received the initial Grants Portal invitation. However, only the Grant Award Owner will be able to invite additional team members to view and manage the project.

4. Suggestion to have a button that can be clicked to receive the notification, since the primary point-of-contact is usually not an admin for the project.
If the admin person should be the primary owner of the award, please reach out to your region contact or CALFIRE.Grants@fire.ca.gov, and we will get that switched over for your award.

5. If we already have an eCivis account through another organization, would we log into this system using our regular eCivis login credentials or do we need two accounts?
You can utilize the eCivis login credentials to link to your award provided the grant award is associated with the same email address. You will need to select "Grants Network Login" at the Portal login page instead of the Portal Login.

6. I registered and logged in. When or how will our CAL FIRE grant information populate into the system?
You will need to wait for an email that will prompt you to login, then it will be populated with your information.

7. Do we populate the Awards section ourselves?
No, CAL FIRE has populated existing award data into the system and will continue to make updates to your awards until we go-live.

8. What if the information is not correct? Can we correct it directly?
If the information is incorrect, please reach out to your Region/Program contact to notify them and we will work on getting it corrected.

System Functionality

1. Will this system be used for Proposals, or only Awards?
As of now, Grants Portal will only be used for awards. Eventually, it will be used for the entire life cycle of your grant.

2. Will Forest Health and Fire Prevention Grants function the same in this software?
Yes, it will be the same for Forest Health and Fire Prevention.

3. Is there a way to download our submitted activity/financial reports? I believe CAL FIRE requires we retain auditable records for three years.

Any files that you have uploaded for a respective award will be available for you to download for your records.

4. Regarding the budget and view files buttons, if you have a budget modification will that appear in those locations?
You can click on View Files and it will pull up all file awards that have been uploaded for your review. If you have a budget modification, you can view it in the View Budget section.

5. Is there a cheat sheet or a PowerPoint on the basic grant system functionality and reporting requirements?
We will be notifying grantees when user guides with more specific information on grant system functionality and reporting requirements are available. They will be posted in Grants Portal and on our webpage at https://www.fire.ca.gov/grants/.

6. Is there an Auto-Save feature in Grants Portal?
No, the system will not auto-save. You will need to manually click Save when making updates.

7. Can these forms be saved as we are working on them, so we can come back to them later?
The Financial Report and Activity Report both have a save feature for you to save your progress while inputting data. We are working on adding the same functionality for Miscellaneous Tasks.

8. Do closed out awards still show up on the list of awards or are they moved to some inactive section?
Closed-out awards will still show up on your list of awards in a view-only mode.

Reporting (Financial, Activity, etc.)

1. Will existing documentation and figures for prior financial reports for current/in-process grants be uploaded by CAL FIRE or by grantees?
Financial data based on previously submitted documentation for current grants will be pre-loaded by CAL FIRE into Grants Portal. The grant documents (agreements, invoices, progress reports, etc.) may not have been included.

2. If there is Indirect cost, is that automatically calculated, or do we have to calculate that amount and enter it? Especially related to reimbursement.
You will still calculate that amount manually to include in the applicable budget category. The amount requested should be consistent with your approved budget.

3. What is "GL"? Can you say more about the GL code/activity? Is that a Cal Fire code or an internal awardee code?

We will be issuing user guides with more specific information to include in the GL Code/Activity boxes when we get closer to the new Go-Live date.

4. Do the GL codes roll over to future periods or do we add them each time based on the documentation we upload for that period?
The GL code line from period to period based on the supporting documentation related to your financial report. For example, if one month you have a financial report that consist of a packet that is 15 pages long you might only have 15 lines. If the next month you submit a packet and it is 150 pages, then you are may have up to 150 lines depending on the supporting documentation you are submitting.

5. How often are financial reports or others requested?
This will vary by program. Please refer to your grant guidelines for reporting requirements and follow what your procedural guide states are the requirements for submitting financial reports and other documents.

6. Does the budget section reflect spending?
You will be able to view past spending as well as add new spending within a financial report.

7. Do you have to be that specific or leave it in categories?
The cost must be broken down into the budget categories for your program. The budget categories are similar across programs.

8. Under the Activity when adding rows are these the budget category sub-categories? Or are these more detailed itemized?
The main lines on your financial reports will look very similar to the cover sheet that grantees currently use, which is always summarized and not broken down into sub-categories.

9. If my university produces an invoice for each reporting period and submits it directly, do we still need to enter specific values into each text box on this online form?
The financial reporting will need to be broken down into the text boxes by budget category in order to maintain the financial records associated with your grant award. Please contact your Region/Program contact and we will work with you on those invoices.

10. Will there be guidance as to whether the financial report should be cumulative or unique to the period? (i.e., if I enter in Q2 of Year 2, will the system be maintaining its own totals of all prior periods?)
The reporting should only pertain to the amounts for the specific reporting period. The system will maintain the aggregate expenditures across all reporting periods for the duration of your grant award and reflect the remaining award amounts available as well as the total amount spent on your award.

11. Is there a file size limit to upload?
    The file upload size is 40MB per file.

12. Can you attach photos to your narrative?
    You may include photos as part of your normal progress reporting.

13. Do we still do all the same reporting plus now we also transfer all that information on a line-by-line here in Grants Portal?
    All the information we are requesting will need to be entered in manually. There is no export functionality to load this information into the various financial reports and activity you will need to complete.

14. So, it looks like the one-page "Invoice" form will still be used and will require an actual, authorized signature, right?
    Yes, we will still require the same invoice that is currently being used. Digital (DocuSign or Adobe Signature) or scanned signatures on the invoice are acceptable. The only change is that instead of emailing it to CAL FIRE, you will upload it to Grants Portal.

15. Are invoices also submitted via hard copy or is everything done through the portal?
    No, all documents for your award will be submitted electronically through the Grants Portal.

16. What do you mean upload? Do you need copies of all the invoices?
    You will need to upload any reports or supporting documentation that you normally supply CAL FIRE. Instead of attaching them to an email, you will be uploading them into Grants Portal. The current supporting documentation requirements will remain the same. Further instructions on how to upload your files will be provided.

17. Where do we describe the work or task that a vendor invoice is for (e.g., 5 crew days on Main Street, project May 1-5)?
    That information will continue to be in your progress report. The information to be included on your financial report will vary depending on the supporting documentation submitted. A separate user guide that details information to include with your invoice submittal is forthcoming.

18. Can you show an example with Salary & Indirects?
    A user guide with instructions on how to submit documentation including Salaries and indirect costs will be provided before we go-live.

19. Can we group the indirects or are those also individual lines?
    This would remain the same as how it is currently reflected on your invoice. The total indirect cost would be entered in as a single value based upon the approved indirect rate against applicable costs for your grant award.

20. Will you cover the option for advance payment of contract components?

The rules for submitting advance funds requests will be similar to existing processes. You will need to select the Advance Fund task within your grant award and submit the same documentation as you currently do for advance funds.

21. Would we do two reports if we had an advance and expended all the advance, as well as having an amount we need to have reimbursed?
The process remains unchanged. You may submit a single report to costs spent during the reporting period and request reimbursement for funds in excess of any advance funds received.

22. When an error is flagged, a pending task has been added to the project, or changes are requested by CALFIRE (in an invoice, for example) what is the notification process for that?
The primary award manager will receive a system notification if revisions to your submitted tasks (invoices, progress reporting, etc.) are needed. Your CAL FIRE Region/Program will also contact you via email to let you know of any errors that require your attention.

23. Are you able to delete files once uploaded? If we were to upload the wrong document, do we have an opportunity to remedy that?
If you are in the process of creating a financial report you can delete any uploaded file, if it has not already been submitted or if it has been sent back for revision. If the submitted financial report requires a correction, the CAL FIRE reviewer will have the ability to send it back with a note identifying the changes needed. You will be able to modify the financial report and resubmit. Once the report has been approved, the document cannot be deleted.

24. Are activity reports the same as progress reports?
The Activity Report section will be where you upload your progress reports.

25. So, we use the current progress report form and upload it under the Activity Report?
Yes, you will upload the progress report form that is unique to your program as an attachment within the Activity Report section. CAL FIRE is currently determining the logistics of progress report submittals. You will be notified once the process is finalized.

26. Will the Activity Report tab be live for us when we start this system, or should we plan to upload our Progress Report elsewhere in the system in the interim?
The Activity Report will be functioning when we go live. The user guide we are working on will include instructions on the information to be submitted and completed on that tab.

27. So, we do NOT submit changes between budgets via this format first, but speak with our region contact first? In other words, Grants Portal is not the FIRST application for a financial amendment?

You should communicate with your region/program contact first prior to initiating an amendment in Grants Portal to ensure that the proposed amendment is feasible.

General Questions & Others

1. Can we have a recording of this meeting?
    The recordings of both sessions are now available on our webpage at https://www.fire.ca.gov/grants/.

2. Will this system be used for contracts with CALFIRE in addition to grants from CALFIRE?
    Not currently, only grants.

3. Will the use of this tool apply to the "Urban and Community Forestry Grant Programs" for this year?
    The Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program has not been incorporated into the system at this time. We hope to do that down the road.

4. Is it always the "forester" we speak with or is it the unit grant manager?
    You will continue to have contact with the same individuals (your Region/Program contact).

5. We listed indirect costs on our application, but they were not covered in the grant award. Should we still include them in this budget?
    You will need to check in with your Region/Program contact and they can help you.

6. Will CalMAPPER data submission happen here too?
    Any required reporting specific to your grant will be submitted through the Grants Portal for your award.

7. Will there be a training on CalMAPPER at some point?
    Please reach out to Region/Program staff for your award and they can help you with any questions related to CalMAPPER.

8. Are advances and reimbursements electronically deposited into the grantee's account, or will they still be mailed?
    No, payments will continue to be issued as mailed checks.

9. Is Grants Portal going to potentially shorten the payment window if all the submitted information is in order?
    The timeframe to issue payments will remain unchanged.

10. What about expediting approval window? When we are in an advance schedule, sometimes we do not actually issue payments to our contractors or partners until we get approval from CAL FIRE for that invoice package. Even on an advance schedule.

The current timelines for distribution will remain the same. We hope this process will result in fewer errors and faster turnarounds.

11. How is the use of Grants Portal intended to change our working relationships with CAL FIRE staff? Will we still have an assigned grant admin staff person?
     None of those working relationships are changing.