VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSISTANCE GRANT
2026 GUIDELINES

"Assistance to Increase Rural Fire Department's Firefighting Capacity"

Sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service and the

Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Office of Forestry

1. This is a 50/50 matching fund program. Federal funds will pay up to 50% of approved program expenditure with the local fire department paying at least 50% <u>or more</u>. Cost-share assistance WILL NOT exceed the awarded funds obligated for a qualified department.
2. A restriction will be placed upon the amount of funding which may be provided to departments regardless of funding requested due to the limited federal funding for this program.
3. Local matching funds must be available at the time the application is submitted, and these funds must match the federal funds dollar for dollar.

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR ELIGIBILITY (Guidelines 4 – 9)

4. Only departments officially recognized and authorized by RESOLUTION or ORDINANCE of the legally constituted governing body of the area served will be considered for grant funding.
5. To qualify for grant funding consideration, a department MUST have a Fire Department Identification Number (FDID), registered through the Louisiana State Fire Marshal's Office.
6. Applying departments MUST be enrolled in and report any structural and/or wildland fires through the Louisiana Fire Incident Reporting System (LFIRS) or the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS).
7. Only departments serving communities with 10,000 or less population counts (current census) may be considered for funding. However, "multi-community" departments may be approved even though the 10,000-population limit is exceeded within the area served, provided no single community served exceeds the 10,000-population count. A department or fire district is "multi-community" if within the official area served there exist two or more recognized communities, each of which must contribute financial support towards and combine resources for the operation of a single department serving all the communities involved.

8. Department personnel complement must be at a minimum of 80% volunteer versus 20% paid employees to be eligible for participation in this grant.

9. Departments must have Wildland Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) readily available for usage or at minimum purchased in the current grant application: 4 sets of wildland PPEs (NFPA 1977 compliant pants and shirts OR coveralls.) Wildland boots, gloves and hardhats are recommended but structural PPEs of this type may be utilized.

GENERAL POINTS OF INTEREST

10. Purchase(s) can be made following receipt of the award letter. Purchase(s) made prior to the date Listed on the 2026 V.F.A. award letter WILL NOT be eligible for cost-share assistance.

11. Examples of equipment/apparatus which may be purchased with grant funds are as follows: Wildland Firefighter clothing NFPA 1977 compliant, hoses, nozzles, hand tools, radios, generators, foam application equipment, slip-on pumping units, materials and labor required to outfit and equip excess military vehicles. Only fire suppression equipment or Personal Protective Equipment (PPE's) may be purchased.

12. Any single item, with a total cost of $10,000 or more WILL NOT be approved for grant funding consideration.

13. Request for funding WILL NOT be considered for the following:

    A. Repair or construction of buildings

    B. Land acquisition

    C. Water lines and hydrants

    D. Any equipment not fire related such as medical or extrication equipment.

    E. Routine operating expenses (phone bills, utility bills, insurance, etc.)

    Training will be limited to special needs and programs only by prior approval of the LDAF V.F.A. Program Administrator.

14. Communities/departments imposing strict boundary limits which exclude rural residences or use a subscription response system will not be considered for funding.

15. Federal auditors require all non-expendable property purchased under the program having a value of $300 or more and a useful life of more than one year be marked and identified as property acquired under Section 7, Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978. Departments shall maintain records on these cost-shared items and approval must be secured prior to any future disposal of these items.

16. Only the original application with an original signature will be accepted. Faxed or e-mail applications will not be accepted.

17. If funds are approved for your department, they must be **SPENT BY THE DISBURSEMENT REPORT'S DUE DATE.** If cost-share assistance funds are not spent by that date, your department may lose that portion of the funds.

18. All purchases acquired under the V.F.A. Program must be verified by:

    - a photocopy of check, credit card, etc. used to purchase the equipment along with the item(s) invoice.

19. Mail the completed **ORIGINAL** application to:

    LDAF - Forestry

    Attention: 2026 V.F.A. Grant

    5825 Florida Blvd., Suite 6000

    Baton Rouge, LA. 70806

20. All applications must be received at this office by**: 4:30 p.m., July 1, 2027**. Any application received after this date will not be considered for funding; therefore, it is suggested that 5 - 7 weekdays be allowed for mailing.

TIMELINE

March 1, 2026: VFA Applications and related materials available for download and submission

July 1, 2026: Completed applications and all documents must arrive at the Office of Forestry, Baton Rouge Headquarters

Sept. 1, 2026: Applicants are notified of their "Approval and Cost-share Award" or "Disapproval" status by letter

March 1, 2027: Deadline for completed 2026 Disbursement Reports, along with supporting documentation to arrive at the Baton Rouge Headquarters.

Applications, Disbursement Reports and Guidelines can be found at: www.ldaf.state.la.us
VFA Desk guide: www.fs.fed.us/fire/partners/vfa/help/table_of_contents.htm

If additional information regarding the V.F.A. Program is required, please contact:

Matt Polk or Nicole Hawes at 225-925-4500 or email: ForestProtection@ldaf.state.la.u