



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

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

AMANDA E. BEAL
COMMISSIONER

September 15, 2026

VOLUNTEER FIRE CAPACITY PROGRAM (VFC)

Application deadline: December 18, 2026

The Forest Protection Division of the Maine Forest Service and the Forestry Committee of the Maine Fire Chief's Association are pleased to announce that applications for the USDA Forest Service VFC cost share grant program are currently being accepted for fiscal year 2027.

The purpose of the Volunteer Fire Capacity (VFC) 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 based on the most current US census. This population limit is meant to ensure fire departments that need the most financial assistance receive available VFC funding.

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

- A single fire department serving a rural area or a rural community with a population of 10,000 or less is eligible. This will be based on the 2020 census data.
- 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 VFC 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 VFC funding is used entirely to support the rural community.
- 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 VFC financial assistance.
- Fire Departments and municipalities must be NIMS compliant.
- Unorganized towns, homeowner associations and plantations without fire departments are not eligible unless they apply through their contracted fire department.
- Applicants must have a current federal System for Award Management (SAM) Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). For more information and to be sure your entity has a UEI and has completed the annual validation to keep it active, visit: <https://sam.gov/content/home>. It may take up to one month to get a UEI number for your agency if you do not have one. The UEI is good for all future federal grants you apply for, but you will need to validate your entity's information is correct each year to keep it current.

Applicants are highly encouraged to use the online application: <https://arcg.is/1fL4DW4> though paper applications are acceptable by request. All applications must have been completed (online application) or postmarked by December 18, 2026. Late submissions will not be accepted. Written applications can be mailed to: Maine Forest Service, Attn: Terri Teller, 22 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0022.

PATTY CORMIER, DIRECTOR
MAINE FOREST SERVICE
18 ELKINS LANE, HARLOW BUILDING



PHONE: (207) 287-2791

WWW.MAINEFORESTSERVICE.GOV

What types of wildland firefighting equipment can be reimbursed?

*If grant requests exceed funding availability, priority may be given to **wildland fire personal protective equipment**.*

The following categories of items are eligible under the VFC grant. Examples are given, but other items may also qualify:

- **Wildland Fire Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** – Nomex shirts, pants, and coats; helmets, gloves, eye and ear protection, and wearable lighting/headlamps. All items must be NFPA and/or OSHA certified, except for minor accessories like leather gloves.
*Ineligible items: boots, dual or tri-certified gear unless NFPA 1977 approved
- **Water Handling Equipment** – portable/wildland pumps and associated equipment used in wildland fire suppression, including hose (maximum 2.5” diameter), nozzles, appliances, Class A foam, and foam accessories.
*Ineligible items: PTO pumps, hose and appliances over 2.5” diameter, water lines, hydrants
- **Hand / Power Tools** – digging, cutting, and scraping tools primarily used in wildland fire suppression, including chainsaws and leaf blowers (limited to 4 each; maximum reimbursement per item is \$400).
*Ineligible items: generators, rescue equipment
- **Communications Equipment** – narrow band compliant portable radios and pagers (limited to 4 each; maximum reimbursement per item is \$400), remote microphones and other radio accessories, satellite text messaging devices.
*Ineligible items: base or mobile radios, repeaters, antennas, cell phones
- **Non-Communications Digital Tools / Equipment** – GPS units, thermal imaging cameras (maximum reimbursement per item is \$400).
*Ineligible items: drones
- **Dry Hydrants** – new dry hydrant installations only (maximum reimbursement is \$3500 for both organized and unorganized territory). *A quote is required to be submitted with the application.*
*Ineligible items: rehabilitation of existing dry hydrants
- **Conversion of Federal Excess Property Equipment** – required parts and labor to convert federal surplus equipment for wildland fire suppression use. *A summary of work to be completed is required to be submitted with the application.*
- **Other Wildland Fire Supplies / Equipment** – Skid units and items not included in the other categories. *A quote is required to be submitted with the application.*
*Ineligible items: routine operating supplies/expenses, repair or construction of buildings, land acquisition, vehicles (including ATV’s), parts or modifications to vehicles

** No single piece of equipment shall exceed **\$9,999.00** in cost. For example, a slip-on tank includes tank, pump and hose reel. The combined cost must not exceed \$9999.00. This is a 50/50 matching grant. **The maximum amount of grant funds awarded per applicant is \$5,000.00.**

Quotes are **not required** with the grant application for any items other than those noted above – dry hydrant installations and items that do not fall in one of the named categories (“Other Wildland Fire Supplies / Equipment” category.)

Program rules:

- The application must be signed by an authorized representative of the fire department/municipality.
- 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).
- No single item may cost more than \$9,999.00.
- Final Selections will be made by mid-January 2027. ***Projects must be completed and reimbursement documentation submitted by July 31, 2027.***
- Extensions may be granted by the Director of the Forest Protection Division for very extenuating circumstances.
- **Projects and documentation not completed / provided by July 31, 2027, may be terminated.**
- Both the "*Assurances*" and "*Agreement*" forms must be signed and submitted online by **March 31, 2027**.
- Information and reminders will be sent to the email address used to submit your grant application.
- Funds will be reimbursed only when the project has been satisfactorily completed and final reports received and approved.
- **The VFC grant is administered as a reimbursement grant.** Proper documentation to support a reimbursement request includes PROOF OF PURCHASE (i.e., copies of invoices and/or confirmed order forms with prices) **and** PROOF OF PAYMENT (i.e., town warrants and/or canceled checks or municipal credit card statements. If personal credit cards are used, then a copy of the reimbursement check from the town or fire department must be provided). Statements from vendors stamped "paid" are not acceptable as proof of payment.
- Reimbursement money will NOT be provided for in-kind services. Any reimbursement for labor must have a detailed receipt.

Matching funds guidelines:

- Minimum match is 50% of the total project cost.
- Applicants must match grant funds with cash on an equal cost share basis.
- Reimbursement checks will only be written for items purchased *after* the award letters are issued in January 2027.

Selection Criteria:

Applications will be reviewed and selected by members of the Maine Forest Service, Forest Protection Division and the Maine Fire Chief's Association's Forestry Committee. Selected applications will then be forwarded to the US Forest Service for approval. All projects must demonstrate that equipment will be used in wildland fire suppression. Towns that are served by predominantly volunteer (at least 80%) fire departments will be funded before those that do not meet this threshold. If grant fund requests exceed this year's grant fund availability, a prioritization rubric will be followed to equitably distribute awards. Applicants who have not received an award in the last 3 years will be placed in the highest priority group, followed by those only receiving 1 award, then 2 awards, and finally 3 awards in a row.

To request an application, or assistance with completing the application, please email or call Forest Ranger Specialist Terri Teller at terri.teller@maine.gov or 207-287-4993.