



## Firewise Community Grants

Applications are requested for the following opportunities:

1. Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) development (up to \$50,000)
2. Hazard mitigation projects (up to \$50,000)

Applicants are encouraged to reach out to the [Regional Firewise Specialist](#) in their area for review and comments prior to the application deadline.

**Deadline:** Applications will be accepted through June 30, 2023.

**Submission:** Completed applications should be emailed or mailed to the [Regional Firewise Specialist](#) for the project area.

## Overview

Firewise USA™ is a national program helping neighbors get organized, find direction, and take action to increase the ignition resistance of their homes and community, and to reduce wildfire risks at the local level. A Firewise® Site is a community that meets a set of voluntary criteria on an annual basis and retains a good standing status.

The Firewise program complements wildfire management and prevention efforts of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, State Fire Marshall, Department of Emergency Management, and local fire departments.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) welcomes applications from communities recognized as, or using grant funds to become, a Firewise USA® Community to assist in:

- The development of a Community Wildfire Preparedness Plan, or
- Wildfire hazard mitigations including assessments, removing/reducing hazard fuels, improving access, and enhancing public safety in the wildland-urban interface.

## Funding Availability

Funding for these grants is made possible through the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978. Available funding for wildfire hazard mitigation projects may vary. Applicants are encouraged to work with their [Regional Firewise Specialist](#) prior to applying to ensure project funds are available.

There is no minimum request. Applicants can request up to \$50,000. Larger requests may be considered for special circumstances. Contact your [Regional Firewise Specialist](#) if you'd like to request more than \$50,000.

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process. The state reserves the right to offer grant amounts that differ from the applicant's request or the maximum award amount. Not all proposals will be funded.

Eligible expenses will be reimbursed up to the executed contract award amount. Expenses incurred, and work initiated before the grant agreement is fully executed are NOT eligible for reimbursement. Likewise, work found by the DNR to be unsatisfactory or performed in violation of federal, state, or local law will not be reimbursed.

## Match Requirements

The Firewise Community Grant is a cost-share program and requires 50 percent match. Matching funds may be in-kind, cash match, or both. Matching funds must be documented and reportable and are subject to audit. Funds from other federal programs cannot be used to match funding for this grant program.

**Cash match** is actual cash contributed to a project, either from the grantee organization or a third party. This can include project-related staff salaries (if they are dedicated to the project), consultant's fees or contractor expenses, equipment rentals, and travel costs.

**In-kind match** is non-cash donations of a good or service, such as personnel time (paid staff that are not project-dedicated), volunteer time, use of equipment, and donated supplies or services.

## Eligibility

Eligible applicants include fire districts, organized townships, cities, counties, identified subdivisions or homeowner’s associations, and NGOs.

## Minimum Requirements:

Applicants must meet the minimum requirements to be considered for these grant opportunities.

	<b>CWPP Development</b>	<b>Wildfire Mitigation Projects</b>
<b>Firewise USA® Community Status</b>	Be recognized as or use part of the requested grant funds to become a Firewise USA® Community	Be recognized as or use part of the requested grant funds to become a Firewise USA® Community
<b>Wildfire Action Plan</b>	Create a CWPP or modify an existing Emergency Operations Plan to collaboratively identify wildfire hazards and prioritize mitigation activities that reduce fuel loading and structural ignitability.	The plan must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address wildfire risk by identifying and mitigating wildland fire hazards,</li> <li>• Prepare for the event a wildfire threatens</li> <li>• Educate the community on fire prevention</li> </ul>
<b>Ability to Complete Work</b>	Able to implement the proposal, document outcomes, and submit final reports on time.	Able to implement the proposal, document outcomes*, and submit final reports on time.  * Project outcomes must satisfy DNR Firewise staff inspection as meeting the intent of the proposal.

The Wildfire Action Plan requirement may be met in multiple ways.

- A Community Wildfire Protection Plan
- Wildfire Emergency Action Plan
- Emergency Operations Plans (EOP) or Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) prepared by emergency management agencies or fire departments/districts if they contain specific information addressing the items listed in the table above.

If no plan exists, the grant request should be for the development of a CWPP, or modifications and additions to an EOP to address wildfire concerns.

## Priorities

Priority will be given to applicants that benefit a low-income community and those with project work in areas identified as having high wildfire hazard potential. Applicants should clearly demonstrate and document if the project meets one or both priorities. Applicants may choose to review data and associated layers from the U.S. Forest Service [Eastern Region Community Wildfire Protection Plans Dashboard](#) for either priority or search the

[Minnesota Compass Location Profile](#) for income information. Applicants are encouraged to ask their [Regional Firewise Specialist](#) to verify their priority status before applying.

**Low-Income Communities**

For purposes of this program, a low-income community is defined as a community where the relevant community or counties (i.e., the counties in which the community is located) has a median household income of less than 80% of the median household income of the state of Minnesota.

**High Wildfire Hazard Potential**

All, or part of the project is located within an area identified as having high wildfire hazard potential.

**Competitive Priorities**

**Firewise Project Categories** Include activities from one or more of the four Firewise Project Categories to enhance public safety toward wildfires in the wildland-urban interface. Those that meet more than one will have priority. See Eligible Activities for information on each category.

1. Assessment activities
2. Planning activities
3. Mitigation activities
4. Information and Education activities

**Northeast Regional Action Plan** Meet one or more of the six [Northeast Regional Action Plan’s](#) action options. Details for each action option is in the linked plan. Those meeting more than one will have priority.

Goal 1: Resilient Landscapes	Goal 2: Fire Adapted Communities	Goal 3: Safe and Effective Wildfire Response
<b>Option 1A</b> – Improve the quality, quantity, and use of LANDFIRE products in the Northeast 20 state region.	<b>Option 2A</b> – Encourage the development and implementation of all hazard state and community plans as a foundation for the development of fire adapted communities.	<b>Option 3A</b> – Getting more Northeast local fire departments involved in wildland fire management (i.e., community planning, WUI awareness, prescribed fire, and other hazard mitigation strategies and activities).
<b>Option 1B</b> – Increase prescribed fire opportunities and training in the region available to agency and cooperator personnel as well as landowners.		<b>Option 3B</b> – Provide expertise and support for breaking down resource availability barriers.
<b>Option 1C</b> – Encourage the development of collaborative partnerships across jurisdictions to facilitate ecosystem-based landscape scale restoration projects.		

## Sustainability

Proposal that addresses current risks and consider future concerns through planning, development, and mitigation will have priority.

## Collaboration

Applicants are encouraged to collaborate and coordinate with partners which can include, but is not limited to, partner organizations, agencies, landowners, and communities to plan, organize, compete project work, or provide funding.

## Eligible Projects

Projects must include activities from one or more of the following categories: Assessment, Planning, Mitigation, Information and Education. More details on eligible projects can be found in [Firewise Eligible Project Examples](#).

### Four Eligible Project Categories:

1. **Assessment Activities** include a detailed assessment of structures either independently or with direct support from the DNR. Communities can also include the improvement of an existing assessment as part of their planning activities. For communities under 200 homes/businesses it is recommended that you perform Level 2 assessments skipping the Level 1 assessment.
  - a. Level 1 Assessment is an assessment of defensible space around a structure based on interpretation of aerial photographs. Any requests for Level 1 assessment activities must also include the completion of Level 2 assessments.
  - b. Level 2 Assessment is an on-the-ground field assessment of individual structures of significant value (e.g., homes).
2. **Planning Activities** should be a part of an overall strategy and plan for all hazards as supported by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and its state partner, the Minnesota Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. Mitigation plans should also address current, existing conditions and future concerns posed by continued development. Activities may include community staffing, printing, materials, distribution, etc.
3. **Mitigation Activities** can include hazardous fuel reduction practices and risk mitigation activities.
  - a. **Hazardous fuel reduction** modifies the fuel complex near structures so a wildfire will not exhibit erratic, aggressive behavior such as spotting, crowing, or torching, or flame lengths more than 1-2 feet. These activities may occur inside or beyond a structure's 100-foot Fuel Modification Zone (including the 30-foot defensible zone). Practices including tree removal, stand reduction, vertical fuel abatement, fire behavior reduction treatment, fuel break construction and maintenance, piling and burning slash, slash bailing, and brush disposal
  - b. **Risk mitigation activities** focus on the reduction of damage to structures and other assets when a wildfire occurs. Activities center on making the suppression response more effective or to making the structure self-defensible by mitigating specific risks within a 100-foot Fuel Modification zone. Specific activities may be defined as mandatory within the 30-foot Defensible

Space Zone. Activities include the creation of defensible space, relocation of permanent flammable assets, access improvement, and signage

**4. Information and Education Activities** are a large component of creating a self-sustaining program.

Activities include:

- a. Materials preparation, procurement, and distribution
- b. Public meetings and special events (e.g., fairs, shows, school visits)
- c. Improved wildland fire training for firefighters

## Ineligible Projects

These grants cannot be used for:

- Dry hydrants to upgrade water resources
- Buying equipment and vehicles, e.g. chainsaws, mowers, trucks, backhoes, streetlights, etc.
- Producing promotional literature to enhance the sale of the community
- Building roads to access the community other than a gated emergency access road
- Consulting services other than for wildfire safety and preparedness consultation
- Any other actions outside the intent of the National Fire Plan as interpreted by the DNR.
- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds
- Parking or traffic violations
- Out of state transportation and travel expenses

## Selection Criteria and Weight

Each application will be reviewed on a 100-point scale. Participating communities will be selected based on:

1. **Goals and impact**, 20 points. Goals meet grant priorities and describes how the proposal will improve or increase wildfire resiliency for the community.
- **Scope of Work**, 20 points. Proposals that include more than one category of [Firewise Eligible Project Examples](#) and meet one or more of the [Northeast Regional Action Plan's](#) Identified Options.
2. **Ability**, 10 points. Provides the approach and how this will achieve results within the project timeline, completing all projects by June 30, 2025.
3. **Diversity**, 10 points. This is a priority for funding, so if you check “no” you are still eligible for funding but will not receive as many points. For purposes of this program, a low-income community is defined as a community where the relevant counties (i.e., the counties in which the community is located) has a median household income of less than 80% of the median household income of the state of Minnesota. Documentation is required and may be a link or attached document.

4. **High Wildfire Risk**, 10 points. All, or part of the project is in an area identified as having a high fire hazard potential. This is a priority for funding, so if you check “no” you are still eligible for funding but will not receive as many points. Documentation is required and may be a link or an attachment.
5. **Project Sustainability**, 10 points. Proposal not only addresses current risks, but considers future concerns through planning, development, and mitigation.
6. **Collaboration**, 10 points. Includes support from partners, agencies, landowners, or communities.
7. **Budget and Match**, 10 points. 1:1 match with sufficient details in the application.

**Criteria Scoring Rubric: this rubric is for the review team to reference while scoring the applications.**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>High Score</b>	<b>Medium Score</b>	<b>Low Score</b>
<b>1. Goals and Impact</b>	<b>15-20</b> Clearly defined purpose with accomplishments linked to grant goals.	<b>7-14</b> Project described generally but missing elements to clarify project and intent. Somewhat addresses goals.	<b>0-6</b> Weak description or goals. Unclear on how the project will be completed. Not linked to the grant goals.
<b>2. Scope of Work</b>	<b>15-20</b> Linked to one or more Firewise categories and one or more of the Northeast Regional Action Plan actions. Clearly shows how the project will mitigate risk for the project area.	<b>7-14</b> Does not clearly describe how it meets more than one Firewise categories or Northeast Action Plan actions.	<b>0-6</b> Missing information on how it meets or does not link to the Firewise categories or Northeast Action Plan actions.
<b>3. Ability</b>	<b>7-10</b> Clear and concise description of the outcomes and has clear, achievable measures.	<b>3-6</b> Describes how outcomes will meet one or more objectives.	<b>0-2</b> Weakly describes, or lack of clarity on measures and outcomes.
<b>4. Low-Income Community</b>	<b>10 points</b> All, or part of a project area is in a low-income community as defined.	<b>Not applicable</b>	<b>0 points</b> The whole project is located outside the footprint of a low-income community or is not documented.
<b>5. High Wildfire Risk</b>	<b>10 points</b> All, or part of the project is located within an area of high wildfire hazard potential and is properly documented	<b>Not applicable</b>	<b>0 points</b> Project is located outside any area with high wildfire hazard potential or is not properly documented.
<b>5. Sustainability</b>	<b>7-10 points</b> Clearly shows maintenance, duration, and long-term plans to support the project after the grant is complete.	<b>3-6 points</b> Missing key details on project maintenance beyond the life of the grant. Otherwise, well-written and detailed.	<b>0-2 points</b> Does not contain details on project sustainability or how it provides benefit beyond the grant timeline.
<b>6. Collaboration</b>	<b>7-10 points</b> Demonstrates strong collaboration with partners and coordination with others.	<b>3-6 points</b> Moderate to limited partnership. Some, but not strong, partner commitment.	<b>0-2 points</b> Very little to no collaboration or coordination with partners.
<b>7. Budget and Match</b>	<b>7-10 points</b> Budget is complete and clearly labeled. Narrative provides details of each budget line and connects to the project goals.	<b>3-6 points</b> Budget items are present, but some line items lack explanation or connection to project goals in the narrative.	<b>0-2 points</b> Errors are present in the budget. Unclear line items. No connection to narrative or poorly written.

## Financial Review Process

All Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must undergo a financial review prior to a grant award made of \$25,000 and higher.

In order to comply with [Policy 08-06](#), Financial Review of Nongovernmental Organizations, please submit one of the following documents with your application, based on the following criteria:

- Grant applicants with annual income of under \$50,000, or who have not been in existence long enough to have a completed IRS Form 990 or audit should submit their most recent board-reviewed financial statements.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of \$50,000 or more and less than \$750,000 should submit their most recent IRS Form 990.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of over \$750,000 should submit their most recent certified financial audit.

## Questions:

Questions may be submitted by phone or email to your [Regional Firewise Specialist](#). All answers will be posted within two business days on the [Minnesota DNR Firewise Community Grant page](#). Please submit questions no later than 4:30 p.m. Central Time, on June 20, 2023.

## Application Content and Submission:

**All electronic applications must be received no later than 4:30 p.m. Central Time, on June 30, 2023.** Mailed applications must be postmarked no later than June 30, 2023. Late applications will not be considered. The applicant will incur all costs incurred in applying to this RFP.

Applicants are encouraged to reach out to the [Regional Firewise Specialist](#) in their area for review and comments prior to the application deadline.

Nongovernmental organizations must submit applicable financial statements as required in [Policy 08-06](#) (see Financial Review section above) along with application.

Applications may be emailed or mailed to the [Regional Firewise Specialist](#) in your area.

## Review Process and Timeline

The review committee will evaluate all eligible and complete applications received by the deadline. The DNR will review all recommendations and is responsible for award decisions. The award decisions of the DNR are final and not subject to appeal.

RFP posted on the DNR web site

January 1, 2023

Questions due no later than 4:30 pm Central Time

June 20, 2023

Applications due or postmarked by

June 30, 2023



Committee begins review of applications	July 1, 2023
Committee recommendations submitted to commissioner for review	August 1, 2023
Grant begins after grantee receives executed agreement from the DNR*	January 1, 2024
Project work completed and final reports due	June 30, 2025

\*Project work cannot begin until awardee receives executed agreement from the DNR.

## Project Completion

The following should be submitted to the Regional Firewise Specialist at least once every six months.

- Report of accomplishments, including map of project outcome locations (if applicable)
- Detailed documentation of project expenses
- Invoice for approved grant reimbursements. Participants may submit invoices with semi-annual reports or at the end of the grant period.

All project work must be completed and the final request for reimbursement, along with final reports, must be submitted by June 30, following the contract end date.

## Grant Provisions

Successful applicants will receive a contract agreement prepared by the DNR, for review and signature. It is the responsibility of the award recipient to thoroughly review this document for accuracy prior to execution. Details will vary, but a Federal Sub-Award Grant Agreement template is available for [review online](#).

## Conflicts of Interest

State grant policy requires that steps and procedures are in place to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both for applicants and reviewers per [Minn. Stat. §16B.98 Subd. 2-3](#) and [08-01 Conflict of Interest in State Grant-Making Policy](#).

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- a grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to the Department due to competing duties or loyalties
- a grantee’s or applicant’s objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties

Applicants selected for awards will have to maintain a conflict of interest policy during the life of the grant. They will be asked to attest to that as part of the grant agreement. In cases where a conflict of interest is in question or disclosed, the applicants or grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to, revising the grant work plan or grantee duties to mitigate the risk, requesting the grant applicant to submit an organizational conflict of interest mitigation plan, disqualification from eligibility for the grant award, amending the grant, or termination of the grant contract agreement.

## Grant Payments

Per [State Policy on Grant Payments](#), reimbursement is the preferred method for making grant payments. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. The State shall review each request for reimbursement against the approved grant budget, grant expenditures to-date and the latest grant progress report before approving payment. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless the DNR has given the grantee a written extension.

## Grant Monitoring

[Minn. Stat. 16B.97](#) and [Policy on Grant Monitoring](#) require the following:

- One monitoring visit during the grant period on all state grants of \$50,000 and higher
- Conducting a financial reconciliation of grantee's expenditures at least once during the grant period on grants of \$50,000 and higher. For this purpose, the grantee must make expense receipts, employee timesheets, invoices, and any other supporting documents available upon request by the State.

The Regional Firewise Specialist will monitor the grant project once during the grant period, after the project work is complete. Project outcomes must meet the intent of the grant proposal, to the satisfaction of the Firewise Regional Specialist and Wildfire Prevention Supervisor.

## Public Data

Per [Minn. Stat. § 13.599](#)

- Names and addresses of grant applicants and amount requested will be public data once proposal responses are opened.
- All remaining data in proposal responses (except trade secret data as defined and classified in [§13.37](#)) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed. For the purposes of this grant, when all grant contract agreements have been fully executed.
- All data created or maintained by the DNR as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret data as defined and classified in [§13.37](#)) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed. For the purposes of this grant when all grant contract agreements have been fully executed.

## Supporting Documents

- [Firewise Eligible Project Examples](#)
- [Northeast Regional Action Plan](#)
- [Application](#)
- [Application Evaluation and Rubric](#)