



May 2024

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE DEFENSE GRANTS

FAQ

Q: How did the review panels select proposals with so many communities applying for funding?

The agency used the three priorities outlined in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to identify the communities in greatest need. These priorities included communities impacted by severe disaster, high or very high wildfire hazard potential, or are low income. The agency then worked with application reviewers made up of state and tribal partners to evaluate and rank the quality and effectiveness of the proposals.

Q: How were the project selection review panels put together?

Four review panels were established, one for each of the four Notice of Funding Opportunities. The three regional panels consisted of non-federal reviewers, primarily state forestry personnel, which were established with the help of the three regional state forestry organizations. The fourth panel was made up of Tribal members.

Q: How did the Forest Service determine which communities were eligible to apply?

Projects developed by communities, Tribes, states, non-profits, and Alaska Native Corporations were eligible for grant funding. Communities received priority for this program if they were in a low-income area, recently impacted by disaster, or in a high or very high wildfire hazard potential location.

Q: How did the Forest Service determine which communities are at high or very high wildfire hazard?

Applicants were required to demonstrate the wildfire risk or hazard within their application. Various tools and assessments were used to assess applicants, ranging from national wildfire risk models to specific regional and state wildfire hazard assessments.

Q: How did the Forest Service determine if a community is low income?

Review panels used data derived from the 2020 U.S. Census data to determine whether a given location is considered low-income. The definition used was a county, community or Tribal area where the median household income was <80% of either their state's median household income, or the nation's median household income.

Q: How did the Forest Service determine if a community is underserved?

Review panels used the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST). The tool uses datasets that are indicators of burdens in eight categories: climate change, energy, health, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development. These are communities that are disadvantaged because they are overburdened and underserved. Alternatively, if a community was identified as low income it would also qualify as an underserved community.

Q: Will the communities receiving these investments be protected from major wildfires?

Fire is a natural part of the ecosystem. We can never say that any community is 100% protected from wildfire risk because of this work. However, research tells us that by placing the right treatments in the right places, at the right time, we can significantly reduce the risk to people, communities and valuable infrastructure.

Q: When will the Forest Service announce the next round of funding?

The Forest Service will announce the next round of funding later in 2024.