

Frequently Asked Questions

Solicitation, Application, and Award Process

1. How many applications will be funded?

First, we expect that these applications will be extra competitive. This year, California State grants generally have less funding available than many recent years. Tribal Wildfire Resilience Grants currently has about \$5 total million available for all grants this cycle. The minimum request is \$250,000 and maximum request amount is \$3,000,000. The number of awards will depend on the strength and number of applications received.

2. Will there be another solicitation next year?

Hopefully, yes! Next year, this program is penciled in for \$10 million dollars. We will not know for certain until the State Legislature passes the California budget over the summer. If that continues, there would be another solicitation in early 2026.

3. Do we combine different project work into one application? What if we are both planning and implementation in one application?

Combine your work into one proposal unless it is **very different** *projects/people/goals* involved in each. This makes it easier to understand how it fits together. It is less admin work not to fill out applications & contracts twice. Projects can also include different parcels of land.

4. How much work and dollar amount should we put in a current proposal?

This is a now vs future proposals question. Much of this depends on the priorities and capacity of the applicant. Proposals that are more focused and have clear outcomes, goals, and tasks will score better than proposal that are ambiguous or don't have clear next steps.

5. Will you fund half of my project if there is so much competition? What about partial awards?

Possibly. Our program usually avoids doing this. Partial awards require updating the scope and all documents before grant agreement is signed. This means further administrative coordination work (and delays) by both the grantee and CAL FIRE, especially if there is not a clear delineation between tasks. as well as delays.

6. When is the performance period?

CAL FIRE can pay (reimburse) for work only when the grant is active & in progress. This would be from when CAL FIRE signs the grant agreement until 3/30/2028.

Eligibility

1. We are not a tribal government or nonprofit, is our organization eligible? Can we apply?

You are not eligible, and your application would be disqualified. Please see grant guidelines. You may partner to draft a grant application and project with an eligible applicant and work as a subcontractor or partner in the grant. Grant funds will only go directly to the eligible organization signed on the grant agreement with CAL FIRE.

2. We could be eligible as both a Tribal government* and Tribal nonprofit, should we apply as a nonprofit or government?

Either is OK - it depends. In terms of grant administration, there is little to no difference to CAL FIRE once the grant is signed and running.

If the Tribe is federally recognized, then a limited waiver of sovereign immunity may be required for certain activities (implementation, advances, equipment purchases). If a tribal government has an associated nonprofit this may be one way to be eligible for this program and not require a limited waiver of sovereign immunity.

***Reminder:** *eligibility as a California State recognized tribal government means the Tribal government is on the NAHC list, not just individuals.*

3. Can you clarify where projects should take place?

Only projects that occur within the California state boundaries are eligible. Tribes whose homelands cross State boundaries or who have been forcibly removed from California may be eligible as applicants, but the activities funded may only occur in California.

4. Is there a specific format for a long-term land access agreement?

CAL FIRE does not have a preferred format for access agreements. This is open-ended because there are many different things that could fulfill it. For example: access agreement contract, memorandum of agreement, memorandum of understanding, co-management agreement, stewardship agreement, conservation easement terms, etc.

5. The project is in ancestral homelands, but the tribe / applicant is not currently the landowner. The current landowner supports the project. Do we need a formal signed Co-Management Agreement before 3/28? Or is a letter of support enough?

For place-specific implementation and many planning projects, a signed / active agreement of some kind would be needed to demonstrate long-term access. This is to show that there is a long-term benefit to the tribe (or tribal non-profit) and not just the current landowner. A letter of participation from the current landowner would not fulfill the requirement because it could be rescinded at any point. In order to be competitive, we recommend that this access agreement should be signed and active before the proposal is submitted by March 28.

It is also possible to have a planning-only section of the project with the outcome/deliverable of securing a long-term formal access to the land areas that you want to work on. For a proposal like this, it would be good to describe how the location is long-term important to the tribe, what are the next steps are in for the agreement, and if/ how grant funding would be used in this process.

Scope of Work & Budget

1. How do partnerships work? Can we subaward? Is a fiscal sponsor considered a subawardee or a subgrantee?

Having partners do part of the project work is OK! We categorize this as a sub-contractual relationship, and it should be reflected in the Contractual budget category.

A fiscal sponsor that does work for the Grantee can invoice as a sub-contractor. These receipts would be included in the reimbursement request from the Grantee to CAL FIRE. CAL FIRE would mail a check to the Grantee, and then the grantee would pay all contractors.

Grants cannot include a sub grantee award process (this is not a block grant). Grants also cannot advance funds to a sub-contractor.

2. My project involves building, maintaining, or rebuilding bridges, water tanks, roads, culverts, fences, buildings, and so on. This is important for wildfire resilience. Is that eligible?

No, these are all examples of infrastructure/construction projects. Costs and would not be eligible for the CAL FIRE Tribal Wildfire Resilience grant program.

Environmental Compliance and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

1. Our work will be done on tribal land/private lands/trust lands/fee title/allotment... does CEQA apply?

Yes, CEQA applies because of the funding source from the California state government. CEQA is an environmental compliance process that requires a lead agency (public) to assess any potential environmental impacts by ground disturbing actions. CAL FIRE funds require filing CEQA documents to the State Clearinghouse.

We have new resources that may be helpful:

- Environmental Compliance flow charts for [Planning](#) and [Implementation](#) projects
- For more info on what this looks like after grant awards start, see the [Environmental Compliance Review Instructions](#)

2. Who will be our lead agency? CAL FIRE? How do we cover these costs?

Our program suggests working with a local lead agency like a County or a Resource Conservation District (RCD). Environmental Compliance is usually faster and easier with local partners, and this builds capacity in the area.

In some cases, it is also possible for CAL FIRE Sacramento HQ (our grants program) or a CAL FIRE Unit to assume lead agency. This request must be disclosed early in your application process before award.

Please know that each lead agency has its own requirements, it is a good idea to consult with a potential lead agency as early as possible.

Applicants can budget for environmental compliance contractors and work for projects that will be carried out with the same grant funds.

3. CEQA must be approved and okayed by CAL FIRE within the first year, what does that mean? What if I have a planning only project?

This means that new awardees have a written approval of environmental compliance clearance on their project within a year of signing the grant agreement contract. If awarded, there is language in the grant agreement stating that this is a requirement to complete with in the first year.

For implementation projects, this means that *all* environmental compliance is completed (documents signed, posted, etc.) and also that CAL FIRE's Climate & Energy environmental compliance team has approved environmental compliance for the grant work.

For planning projects this can be a simple check. It is still required at the beginning of the project so that we can be sure to have environmental compliance in place and not delay reimbursement of grant funds.