

**State of California**

**PUBLIC RESOURCES CODE**

**Section 4124.5**

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4124.5. (a) The department shall establish a local assistance grant program for fire prevention and home hardening education activities in California. Groups eligible for grants shall include, but are not limited to, local agencies, resource conservation districts, fire safe councils, the California Conservation Corps, certified community conservation corps as defined in Section 14507.5, University of California Cooperative Extension, the Board of Commissioners under California Volunteers described in Section 8411 of the Government Code, Native American tribes, and qualified nonprofit organizations. The department may establish a cost-share requirement for one or more categories of projects.

(b) (1) The local assistance grant program shall establish a robust year-round fire prevention effort in and near fire threatened communities that focuses on increasing the protection of people, structures, and communities. To the maximum extent practicable, the grants shall be designed to be durable and adaptively managed so that while improving resiliency to wildfire, the projects, when on forest land, retain a mixture of species and sizes of trees to protect habitat values. The department shall prioritize, to the extent feasible, projects that are multiyear efforts.

(2) For purposes of this subdivision, “fire threatened communities” means those communities in high and very high fire hazard severity zones, identified by the director pursuant to Section 51178 of the Government Code, or Article 9 (commencing with Section 4201) of this code, or on the “Fire Risk Reduction Community” list maintained by the board pursuant to Section 4290.1.

(c) Eligible activities shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

(1) Development and implementation of public education and outreach programs. Programs may include technical assistance, workforce recruitment and training, and equipment purchases.

(2) Fire prevention activities as defined in Section 4124.

(3) Projects to improve compliance with defensible space requirements as required by Section 4291 through increased inspections, assessments, and assistance for low-income residents.

(4) Technical assistance to local agencies to improve fire prevention and reduce fire hazards.

(5) Creation of additional “Firewise USA” communities in the state or other community planning or certification programs deemed as appropriate by the department.

(6) Projects to improve public safety, including, but not limited to, access to emergency equipment and improvements to public evacuation routes.

(7) Vegetation management along roadways and driveways to reduce fire risk. Where appropriate, the Department of Transportation shall be consulted if state infrastructure will be affected. Those projects shall remain consistent with paragraph (1) of subdivision (b).

(8) Public education outreach regarding making homes and communities more wildfire resilient, including defensible space training.

(9) Projects to reduce the flammability of structures and communities to prevent their ignition from wind-driven embers.

(10) Development of a risk reduction checklist for communities that includes defensible space criteria, structural vulnerability potential, and personal evacuation plans.

(d) The department may consider the fire risk of an area, the geographic balance of projects, and whether the project is complementary to other fire prevention or forest health activities when awarding local assistance grants.

(e) (1) Until January 1, 2024, the director may authorize advance payments from a grant awarded pursuant to this section. The advance shall not exceed 25 percent of the total grant award. The director may authorize a greater amount, not to exceed 50 percent of either the total grant award or the cost of equipment, whichever amount is less, for the purpose of purchasing necessary equipment.

(2) The grantee shall expend the funds from the advance payment within 6 months of receipt, unless the department waives this requirement.

(3) The grantee shall file an accountability report with the department four months from the date of receiving the funds and every four months thereafter.

(f) The department may expand or amend an existing grant program to meet the requirements of this section.

(g) Funding for the local assistance grant program created pursuant to this section shall be made upon appropriation by the Legislature.

(Amended by Stats. 2021, Ch. 382, Sec. 8. (SB 63) Effective January 1, 2022.)