Crown Land Wildfire Risk Reduction Program - Columbia Basin Economic Recovery Initiative

PROGRAM GUIDE

This guide identifies the types of projects that are eligible for the Columbia Basin Economic Recovery Initiative and gives you information on how to complete an application.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROGRAM GUIDE 1

1. PROGRAM INTRODUCTION 1
2. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS 2
3. APPLICATION DEADLINE 2
4. REQUIREMENTS FOR FUNDING 3
5. WILDFIRE ADVISORY SUPPORT 3
6. WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS ARE ELIGIBLE? 3
7. I NEED FUNDING FOR A FUEL MANAGEMENT PROJECT. WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW? 5
8. WHAT TYPES OF COSTS ARE ELIGIBLE? 6
9. WHAT TYPES OF COSTS ARE NOT ELIGIBLE? 7
10. HOW MUCH WILL THE PROGRAM FUND? 7
11. HOW DOES THE PROGRAM SELECT PROJECTS FOR FUNDING? 8
12. GRANT MANAGEMENT AND APPLICANT RESPONSIBILITIES 8
13. FINAL REPORT REQUIREMENTS AND PROCESS 9
14. HOW DO I APPLY? 10

1. PROGRAM INTRODUCTION

The program supports short-term and immediate job creation for wildfire risk reduction in the Columbia Basin region (the Basin) to build local wildfire resiliency and assist communities in recovering from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Crown Land Wildfire Risk Reduction Program – Columbia Basin Economic Recovery Initiative is a partnership program between the British Columbia Wildfire Service (BCWS), its partners within the Ministry of Forests, Land, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD), and Columbia Basin Trust (the Trust).

The program focuses on community-based **job creation projects** that contribute to wildfire risk reduction outcomes particularly in **rural communities in the Basin**. Characteristics of the program are:

- Supports activities related to the seven FireSmart™ disciplines working towards wildfire resiliency;
- Expands applicant eligibility to community associations and registered non-profits;

- Supports short-term training and capacity building activities at the local level so that communities may become more empowered to identify wildfire interface risks and implement community-led solutions; and
- Supports fuel management on provincial Crown land and adjacent local government-owned land and/or First Nations land.

FLNRORD and the Trust jointly developed the program, a short-term partnership that complements existing provincial programs under the Community Resiliency Investment Program (CRI). The CRI reduces wildfire risk and increases community resiliency to wildfires across BC. This program is just one example of the many programs, initiatives and supports that comprise BC's Economic Recovery Plan.

The Trust is administering project funding from BCWS and will enter into Contribution Agreements with recipients of successful projects. Guidance for the program is provided by a Management Committee comprised of staff from the Trust and FLNRORD. An Evaluation Committee also comprised of Trust and FLNRORD staff will oversee the adjudication of project applications. Advisory services are provided by Trust wildfire advisors to support eligible applicants' project applications.

2. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants must be located in Columbia Basin Trust's region.

Eligible applicants include:

- Registered non-profits from communities with identified wildfire risk reduction need;
- Legally incorporated society-run fire departments;
- First Nations communities in Columbia Basin Trust's region;
- Post-secondary institutions;
- Local governments (municipalities or regional districts); and
- Improvement Districts that operate a fire protection service.

Eligible applicants may submit one application per intake. Applicants operating outside of the Basin must partner with community-based organizations in the Basin and demonstrate that proposed projects reduce wildfire risk to communities in the Basin.

Regardless of which type of eligible applicant you are applying on behalf of, your project should demonstrate that it will benefit the Basin and that the primary beneficiary is not the applicant or solely the members of a membership-based organization.

3. APPLICATION DEADLINE

The application deadline is **April 19, 2021 at 2 pm PT / 3 pm MT**. Applications are not accepted after the deadline. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

4. REQUIREMENTS FOR FUNDING

To qualify for funding, applicants must demonstrate the extent to which the proposed project will support **immediate job creation** in order to build local wildfire resiliency and assist communities in recovering from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

All projects must adhere to the following requirements:

- Create new employment, such as new positions or increased hours for existing part-time positions;
- Be a new project or a new project phase that addresses wildfire risk reduction (retroactive funding is not available);
- Be completed within one year of grant approval;
- Be **incremental** to those project activities eligible to other CRI programs. In the case that a proposed project is eligible for more than one CRI funding program, **partial funding** through this program may be considered;
- Meet physical distancing and other public health guidance in relation to COVID-19 for in-person activities, meetings or events;
- Meet all applicable WorkSafe BC requirements and regulations; and
- Meet all requirements for the involvement of an accredited qualified professional, and/or trained and certified contractor involvement in the Project as applicable.

Projects that include fuel management activities must also adhere to additional requirements. See sections 6 and 7 of this Program Guide for complete details.

5. WILDFIRE ADVISORY SUPPORT

Advisory services are provided by the Trust's wildfire advisors to help applicants determine project eligibility and navigate the application process. If you have a project idea, contact the wildfire advisors as early as possible to discuss your project, especially if you are contemplating applying for fuel management activities on provincial Crown land. Contact wildfire@ourtrust.org or 1.800.505.8998 for more information.

6. WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS ARE ELIGIBLE?

To be eligible for funding, projects must result in the creation of new employment (i.e. new position(s) or increase hours for an existing part-time position) and align with at least one of the three broad categories described below:

1. **Job creation for projects related to the seven FireSmart disciplines** (PDF download) **that promote community awareness of, and resiliency to, wildfire interface risks.**

   Project activities can include, but are not limited to:
   - Supporting the establishment and administration of Community FireSmart Resiliency Committees;

- FireSmart Coordinator and/or community champion positions (e.g. coordinate home assessments, establish FireSmart educational outreach program, coordinate FireSmart Projects, oversee reporting and information sharing, etc.);
- Qualified Local FireSmart Representative positions (e.g. conducting Home Ignition Zone Assessments, conducting Critical Infrastructure Assessments, facilitating Farm and Ranch Workbook preparation, delivering champion workshops, assisting neighbourhoods in working towards FireSmart Canada Neighbourhood Recognition, etc.); and
- Innovative approaches that demonstrate in the application how they relate to the seven FireSmart disciplines.

2. Fuel management demonstration and innovation projects that create jobs.

Project activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Innovative approaches to fuel management (e.g. testing mechanical methods using smaller series machinery);
- Planning for fuel management consistent with the standards provided on the BCWS Tools for Fuel Management Guidance (including the Wildfire Risk Reduction Planning Standard) that are focused on reducing wildfire risk to communities as mapped in the BCWS Wildland Urban Interface Risk Class maps and data;
- Prescription development:
    i. must be consistent with the 2020 Fuel Management Prescription Guidance document;
    ii. must be completed, signed and sealed by a qualified professional that is accredited by their professional association and include a spatial component layer if occurring on provincial Crown land; and
    iii. prescriptions on provincial Crown land must include written correspondence (e.g. email) from the FLNRORD Land Manager confirming that information sharing with First Nations has been completed prior to initiation of operational treatment activities.
- Completion of operational fuel management demonstration projects including pre-treatment, treatment and post-treatment activities, including:
    i. Locations that are visible and accessible to community members, have a showcase or educational component (e.g. signage, media) and are within the wildland urban interface;
    ii. Projects consistent with fuel management outcomes identified in the 2020 Fuel Management Prescription Guidance;
    iii. Applicants can apply for fuel management demonstration projects that include prescription and fuel management treatment for the same treatment unit(s) provided that sufficient detail on estimated treatment size and post-treatment outcomes are included; and
    iv. Operational fuel treatment on provincial Crown land must include written correspondence (e.g. email) from the FLNRORD Land Manager confirming that First Nation information sharing has been completed prior to initiation of operational treatment activities. In addition, we highly encourage applicants to initiate consultation with the appropriate Natural Resource District authorization staff as early as possible, preferably before applying to this Program.

- Smaller than traditional fuel management treatments (generally no more than 5 to 10 hectares).
    i. Fuel management projects that are larger may be considered but must be accompanied by an appropriate rationale and may not be prioritized.

Projects may be prioritized if they are adjacent (e.g. within 100m) to provincial Crown land that is part of a larger polygon associated with areas of higher wildfire risk near communities and critical infrastructure.

3. **Training and skills development related to Categories 1 and 2 above that lead to immediate employment.**

Project activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Internships or short-term/seasonal employment for seasonal staff or post-secondary students seeking to gain career-related work experience in wildfire risk reduction in the Basin;
- Training and skills development that leads to immediate employment for those who are unemployed, underemployed, or temporarily laid off due to COVID-19; and
- Delivery of training such as Local FireSmart Representative workshops and courses to undertake FireSmart assessments.

7. I NEED FUNDING FOR A FUEL MANAGEMENT PROJECT. WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Fuel management projects involving prescriptions and/or operational fuel treatment on provincial Crown land require confirmations and approvals from the FLNRORD Land Manager in your Natural Resource District.

In addition to the requirements indicated in section 6 above, projects that include **fuel management activities** must also adhere to the following requirements:

- Ensure that all proposed fuel management activities are located on provincial Crown land, local government owned land, or First Nations land;
- Demonstrate consistency with BC Wildfire Service objectives for the project area;
- Ensure compliance with applicable legislations and regulations: Federal (e.g. *Fisheries Act; Species at Risk Act*); Provincial (e.g. *Forest and Range Practices Act, Open Burning Smoke Control Act, Wildfire Act*) and local authority (e.g. burning bylaws or other bylaws or plans);
- As applicable, apply to and receive required approvals from the Lands Manager for authorizations and permits;
- For activities that fall under the practice of forestry, be developed and, where applicable, signed and sealed by a forest professional that is accredited by the Association of BC Forest Professionals and operating within their scope of practice; and
- Fuel management prescriptions and treatments must be signed and sealed by an appropriately qualified professional.

Successful applicants to the Program whose applications include phased fuel management projects will be required to submit the following information to the Trust before commencing fuel management operational activity treatments:

- **fuel management prescription (all projects) and**
- **PDF map (preferably georeferenced) of the project location and email from the Land Manager that First Nations information sharing has been completed (only for projects located on provincial Crown land).**

All applicants contemplating fuel management activities on provincial Crown land should contact the wildfire advisors as early as possible. The wildfire advisors can help you determine the exact documentation that FLNRORD will require for your proposed project and who to contact to receive it. Contact wildfire@ourtrust.org or 1.800.505.8998 for help developing your project and preparing your application.

8. WHAT TYPES OF COSTS ARE ELIGIBLE?

Eligible costs are direct costs that are approved by the Evaluation Committee, properly and reasonably incurred, and paid by the applicant to carry out eligible activities. Eligible costs can only be incurred from the date of project approval until the date the final report is submitted.

Eligible activities must be cost-effective and may include:

- Fuel management planning and prescriptions:
  - Prescription development/update: activities including site evaluation, field reconnaissance, wildfire threat assessment plots (if applicable), data collection and the evaluation of site access, lay out and traversing of proposed areas for treatments, and preparation of all report requirements, including maps and spatial data.
- Operational fuel management projects:
  - Pre-treatment activities: activities required to obtain authorizations, danger tree assessments, notification to First Nations and stakeholders and public engagement activities;
  - Treatments: pruning, thinning, tree falling, brushing, grazing, debris management (e.g. pile and burning) and/or reforestation;
  - Post-treatment activities: completion of post treatment data collection, signage and post treatment report and preparation of all final report requirements, including maps, spatial data and metadata, including a post treatment report;
- Costs related to skills development and training (e.g. instructor costs, first aid, Power Saw Safety, Danger Tree Assessment Certification);
- Capital purchases required for effective project delivery **up to $5,000 maximum** (e.g. signage, hand tools);
- Community FireSmart Resiliency Committee Coordinator costs for those applicants (e.g. community associations, registered non-profits) that are **ineligible** to the CRI FireSmart Community Funding and Support program (e.g. administration of Community FireSmart and Resiliency Committee (CFRC) meetings, minutes and agendas, determining topics, setting meetings and furthering action items for the Committee, sharing information with the BC FireSmart Committee, etc.).

The following costs are also eligible provided they directly relate to the eligible activities identified above:

- Incremental staff and administration costs that are above and beyond typical operational costs (e.g. authorizations for land management);
- Consultant costs;
- Project management costs;
- Public information costs (e.g. post treatment signage);
- Other costs reasonably incurred that are directly tied to eligible project activities.

9. WHAT TYPES OF COSTS ARE NOT ELIGIBLE?

The following costs are not eligible for funding through this program:

- Costs that do not directly align with the three project categories stated above;
- Expenses or costs paid or committed to by others (e.g. fuel management costs covered under appraisal systems or legally required under the *Wildfire Act*);
- Costs that are incurred prior to receiving project approval;
- Costs that are directly eligible to other open CRI programs. In the case that a proposed project is eligible for more than one CRI program, partial funding through this program may be considered;
- Involve paying for core or ongoing operating expenses;
- Support activities of political parties, advocacy or lobby groups or of organizations that are exclusive or discriminative in nature;
- Work undertaken by BCWS, including staff support;
- Costs directly pertaining to legally required emergency preparedness, response and recovery activities;
- Fuel management activities occurring on private land; and
- Costs related to firefighter crew training.

Any activity that is not outlined above or is not directly connected to activities approved in the application by the Evaluation Committee is not eligible for funding. This includes:

- Capital expenses greater than $5,000;
- Routine or ongoing operating costs (i.e. heating and lighting; security; software subscriptions or other subscription fees); and
- Costs related to developing or submitting the application.

Individual project eligibility is determined by the program partners at their sole discretion.

10. HOW MUCH WILL THE PROGRAM FUND?

Applicants can request up to 100% of total project costs, to a maximum amount of $150,000.

To ensure transparency and accountability in the expenditure of public funds, all other grant contributions for eligible portions of the project must be declared and, depending on the total value, may decrease the value of the grant.

The program has $2.4 million available.

11. HOW DOES THE PROGRAM SELECT PROJECTS FOR FUNDING?

The Evaluation Committee will assess all eligible applications as per the program criteria outlined in this Guide. Applications that demonstrate the following selection criteria may be prioritized for funding:

- Meet the intent of the program by clearly demonstrating:
  - Immediate job creation and training opportunities, including estimates of the per person days per project;
  - Increased and sustainable local wildfire resiliency and mitigation efforts;
  - Project scope addresses known gaps in existing CRI supports; and
  - Local recovery from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Demonstrate longer-term capacity building;
- Demonstrate ties with community identified priorities for wildfire risk reduction;
- Demonstrate relevant partnerships;
- Demonstrate project readiness and ability to move forward within the stated timelines;
- Demonstrate cost effective budget to complete works;
- Demonstrate information sharing with the appropriate Natural Resource District (for proposed fuel management activities on provincial Crown land); and
- Address identified wildland urban interface risk (e.g. adjacent to critical infrastructure; within 1km of valued assets; within 2km of community; easily accessible).

We strive to distribute program funds across communities, organizations and project types, and will consider this during the adjudication of applications.

All application materials will be shared with the BCWS and FLNRORD.

12. GRANT MANAGEMENT and APPLICANT RESPONSIBILITIES

Grants are awarded to eligible applicants only and, as such, the applicant is responsible for completion of the project as approved and for meeting reporting requirements. Applicants are also responsible for proper fiscal management, including maintaining acceptable accounting records for the project. The Trust reserves the right to audit these records.

Notice of Funding Decision

The review process usually takes up to four weeks. We will contact you by email, at the email address on your application form, to let you know if your project has been approved for funding. Prior to approving any projects, Trust staff may contact you during the evaluation phase to request additional information.

If approved, we will also let you know whether there are conditions you will need to address. We will then send a Contribution Agreement for signature and you will receive the funding after both parties sign it.

Project Start

Projects should begin no earlier than 01-Jun-2021. Funding can only be put toward approved project expenses after the Contribution Agreement has been signed.

Timeframe for Implementing Approved Projects

All approved activities are required to be completed within one year of approval. Your project budget should reflect the total cash required to complete the project over the entire timeframe.

What else do I have to keep in mind?

Even if a project meets the eligibility criteria it may not be selected for funding as there is a likelihood that the Program will receive requests for more funding than what is available. The Evaluation Committee retains the discretion to determine project eligibility and the amount of funding it may allocate to each project. The Evaluation Committee retains the discretion to offer part, or all of the funding request.

13. FINAL REPORT REQUIREMENTS AND PROCESS

All funded activities must be completed within one year of notification of funding approval and the final report is due within 60 days of project completion.

The Trust will provide successful applicants/recipients a final report template. Final reporting requirements may include, but are not limited to:

- Person-hours of jobs created in each of the following categories:
    - Planning/Prescription Development
    - Treatment – Manual (e.g. pruning, hand raking)
    - Treatment – Mechanical (e.g. mechanical thinning, processing)
    - Capacity building and coordination
- Training and skills development Financial summary listing revenues and expenses.
- Copies of any training or capacity-building materials that were produced with grant funding.
- Any additional information reasonably requested by the Trust.
- For projects that include **fuel management prescriptions:**
    - Copy of the fuel management prescription, signed and sealed by a Registered Professional Forester, including all ancillary assessments (e.g. terrain stability);
    - maps in PDF format; and
    - Email from the Land Manager confirming that First Nations information sharing has been completed.
- For projects that include **fuel management demonstration:**

- Post- treatment report with updated survey data collection as per the direction in the prescription that includes a summary of post treatments conditions and fire behaviour outcomes and relationship to prescription treatment objectives;
- Maps in PDF format; and
- Spatial data for Provincial Crown land treatments is required to be entered into RESULTS and the Activity Treatment ID is required as evidence of a successful RESULTS entry. Please refer to the "RESULTS Information Submission Specifications: Government Funded Activities".

All final report materials will be shared with BCWS & FLNRORD.

14. HOW DO I APPLY?

1. Download the Application Guide and the optional Worksheet here:
   a) Application Guide: http://ourtrust.org/?ddownload=22848
   b) Worksheet: http://ourtrust.org/?ddownload=22845
2. Review the Application Guide for direction and advice on how to complete the application form.
3. Use the Worksheet to develop your application offline if you so choose.
4. Prepare all your supporting documents for upload. You may upload up to six files through the online application form. To submit more than six documents or if your documents are cumulatively more than 3 MB, email them to us at wildfire@ourtrust.org.
5. Complete the online application form at https://forms.ourtrust.org/columbia-basin-economic-recovery-initiative

If you have any questions about the application process, or would like to submit a paper application, contact the Trust at wildfire@ourtrust.org or 1.800.505.8998.