**Western States Program Specifications** July 2023

**Objectives of the Western States Program**: Reduce hazardous fuels to create defensible space around private residences and on private properties focusing on structures in the area and ingress/egress routes to reduce risk to life and property from wildfire.

**Cost Share Agreements:** Contractual agreements between Lincoln County and landowners whereas the county will pay for 75% of the allowable costs for treatments on the acres under contract and the landowner is responsible for the remaining 25% of allowable costs and 100% of any costs in excess of the allowable costs. Retro-active agreements are not allowed. A signed contract for the agreed treatment acres must be in place prior to implementation of fuel reduction activities.

**Treatment Locations**: Treatments are focused around residences and outbuildings and/or along roads accessing the landowner’s property or adjacent properties whose access is through or adjacent to the contracted landowner’s property.

**Treatment Specifications**: Defensible space around structures is termed the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ). This zone is comprised of sub-zones: Immediate Zone is 0-5 ft from home, Intermediate Zone is 5 to 30 ft from home, and Extended Zone is 30 to 100 ft from home or up to 200 ft if the property allows for it.

**The Western States grant requires the following contract specifications:**

**ON PROPERTIES WHERE STRUCTURES ARE PRESENT**: Property owners must meet the vegetative spacing requirements for the Immediate and Intermediate Zones as described in the Additional Information portion of this document below. This includes removal of non-fire resistant live trees and shrubs, and dead vegetation including dried leaves, pine needles and ground debris accumulation within 5 feet of the structure in the Immediate Zone. In the Intermediate Zone a 20-foot spacing is required between any structures and live vegetation, including tree crowns. Trees retained in the Intermediate Zone are required to be pruned to 10 feet or 1/3 removal of the total crown for younger trees. Trees must have a 20-foot spacing between tree crowns and ladder fuels must be removed. Tree crown spacing is measured between the longest branches in the tree crown.

Additionally, homeowners are expected to strive to meet and maintain the recommendations in the checklist of Home Ignition Immediate and Intermediate Zones as described in the attached document “Additional Information and Homeowner Checklists**”**.

**ON LAND WITHOUT STRUCTURES OR IN THE EXTENDED ZONE BEYOND STRUCTURES**: A minimum of 10 ft spacing between tree crowns on slopes less than 20 percent is required. Pruning of remaining trees to a minimum of 10 ft on mature trees or 1/3 of the total height on smaller trees is required, as is removal of ladder fuels. Where slopes exceed 20 percent, crown spacing requirements increase to 20 ft with a minimum pruning height of 15 feet or 1/3 the total tree height on smaller trees.

Landowners are expected to maintain vegetative conditions after treatment has occurred.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND HOMEOWNER CHECKLISTS**

**Facts about structure survivability**

Experiments, models, and post-fire studies have shown homes ignite due to the condition of the home, and everything around it, up to 200’ from the foundation. Homes and their surrounding area are vulnerable to three potential types of ignition sources:

**Ember attacks (a/k/a firebrands**): Burning pieces of airborne wood and/or vegetation that can be carried more than a mile through the wind can cause spot fires and ignite homes, debris, and other objects. They can also penetrate and smolder in woodpiles, patio/deck items, vents and openings, roofs and debris filled gutters. Most home losses in a wildfire are from embers, not by direct contact with flames.

**Surface fires:** Typically, small flames burning through grass and ground litter. They can reach houses or attachments if there is no interruption in the types of fuel sources. Flames touching a house, fence or deck can cause them to ignite.

**Crown fire:** Large flames burning in the tops or canopies of trees. These large flames radiate heat that can ignite wood walls from up to 100’ away. Other types of large flames can come from detached buildings, burning wood piles and ignited vehicles.

Decades of research have shown that both the house and the landscape adjacent to it play a critical role in the structure surviving a wildfire. A wildfire can transfer from ignited vegetation or an ignited home(s) through:

**• Radiation • Convection • Embers/Firebrands**

A home’s building materials, design and landscape have a significant role in the level of exposure that can be endured before ignition occurs from any of these sources.

**THE HOUSE AND IMMEDIATE ZONE CHECKLIST**

The Immediate Zone includes both the home and the area of 0 to 5 feet out from the furthest attached exterior point of the home. Ignition resistant building materials, construction techniques, along with vegetation and debris removal, play a vital role during wildfires.

**PRIORITY 1**

■ CARPORTS: Remove flammable items stored in carports.

■ DECKS AND ELEVATED PORCHES: Place 1/8” metal mesh screening between low profile decks from surface to ground, to block embers from collecting underneath. Never store flammable materials underneath elevated decks/porches. Remove dead vegetation and debris from under decks/porches, and between deck board joints.

■ FENCING: Use non-flammable fencing material (metal or masonry) when attaching directly to the siding. Ensure there’s a minimum of at least 5’ of noncombustible material where it attaches to the siding. Do not add vines or other types of vegetation to fencing material. Wooden fences can carry flames directly to the house.

■ FIREPLACE CHIMNEYS: Remove debris that may accumulate at roof-to-wall intersections. Embers from a fireplace can exit the chimney and could ignite a wildfire; to prevent this install a spark arrestor. When wildfires are approaching close the damper, fireplace screens and glass doors.

■ GUTTERS: Metal roof gutters do not ignite, only the debris material that accumulates in them. Keeping them clean is very important. Vinyl roof gutters can ignite when the debris material is ignited and flaming gutters can fall from the roof edge and land next to the house, which is why the immediate zone needs to be clear of flammable materials.

■ ROOF MAINTENANCE: Keep roofs clean from leaf litter and pine needles. Remove all tree limbs within 20 feet of the chimney, or that overhang the roof.

■ SIDING: Use ignition-resistant building materials on exterior walls. Examples include:

Stucco, masonry products, plaster, and cement. Seal gaps and crevices. Examine the siding for locations where embers could accumulate or lodge and apply caulking at trim- to-siding locations where it is missing or has failed.

**PRIORITY 2**

■ EAVES AND SOFFITS: Reduce the size and number of embers that may pass through vents in the eaves by covering them with a 1/8-inch metal mesh screening. Inspect soffit vents and maintain as needed.

■ CRAWL SPACES: Remove combustible materials and install 1/8” mesh screening on vents.

■ FOUNDATION: All foundation vents should have 1/8-inch corrosion-resistant metal screening.

■ GARAGES: Weather seal the perimeter of garage doors to help keep embers out. Be sure the door is tight fitting so embers cannot slide under the door or in from the sides. If possible, choose a metal or wood core door with metal exterior.

■ SLIDING GLASS DOORS: Choose double-paned tempered glass. Consider fireproof shutters to protect large windows and glass doors from radiant heat.

**PRIORITY 3**

■ ROOFING MATERIALS: Types of Class A fire-rated roofing products offer the best protection. Examples include: Composite shingles, metal, cement tile and clay. Inspect shingles/tiles and replace/repair those that are loose or missing to prevent ember penetration. If gaps exist between the roof covering and the roof deck at the eave or ridge, fill the space with a “bird stop” material.

■ SKYLIGHTS: Remove debris next to and on skylights. Glass is a better option than plastic or fiberglass.

■ VENTS: Consider purchasing closure devices for foundation and gable end vents and installing a louver- type dryer vent that stays closed unless the dryer is running. Clean debris from attic vents and install 1/8-inch metal mesh screening. For turbine vents, access the attic and inspect where the vent attaches to the roof and attach 1/8-inch screening to the roof sheathing. Dormer-face vents should be replaced with a low-profile vent. Ridge vents should be rated for high wind/rain exposure.

■ WINDOWS: Multi-paned tempered glass can help reduce the risk of fracture or collapsing in a wildfire.

**LANDSCAPING/HARDSCAPING** - Ignition resistant building materials, construction techniques, along with vegetation and debris removal, play a vital role during wildfires.

**PRIORITY 1**

■ Dead vegetation, dried leaves, pine needles and ground debris accumulation should be frequently removed from this area.

■ Hardscaping components should be installed around the perimeter of the home - keep them free of ground litter/debris. Concrete, stone, or gravel walkways are great additions to the Immediate Zone.

■ Remove trees and shrubs from this area; or replace with succulents.

■ Wood mulch products should be replaced with non-combustible mulch products such as crushed stone/gravel options.

**PRIORITY 2**

■ Trim tree limbs that overhang from the Intermediate zone into this area.

**INTERMEDIATE ZONE CHECKLIST**

The Intermediate Zone includes the area of 5 to 30 feet from the furthest exterior point of the home.

**LANDSCAPING/HARDSCAPING**

Ignition resistant building materials, construction techniques, along with vegetation and debris removal, play a vital role during wildfires.

**PRIORITY 1**

■ Clear vegetation from under large stationary propane tanks.

■ Keep lawns and native grasses mowed to a height of four inches.

■ Remove ladder fuels (vegetation under trees) so a surface fire cannot reach the crowns. Prune trees up ten feet from the ground; for shorter trees do not exceed 1/3 of the overall tree height.

■ Water plants, trees, and lawns to keep them from becoming dry.

**PRIORITY 2**

■ Space trees to have a minimum of 20 feet between crowns with the distance increasing with the percentage of slope.

■ Trees and shrubs in this zone should be limited to small clusters of a few each to break up the continuity of the vegetation across the landscape.

**PRIORITY 3**

■ Create fuel breaks with driveways, walkways/paths, patios, and decks.

■ Tree placement should be planned to ensure the mature canopy is no closer than ten feet to the edge of the structure.

**EXTENDED ZONE CHECKLIST**

Extends out from 30 to 100 feet or more if property boundaries allow.

**PRIORITY 1**

■ Dispose of heavy accumulations of ground litter/debris.

■ Remove dead plant and tree material.

■ Remove vegetation adjacent to storage sheds or other outbuildings within this area.

**PRIORITY 2**

■ Remove small conifers growing between mature trees.

**PRIORITY 3**

■ Trees 30 to 100+ feet from the home should have at least 10 feet between tree crowns. Guidelines for tree crown spacing vary depending on slope, tree species and understory vegetation, along with proximity to homes and other site-specific factors.

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

■ Addressing should be visible from the road to assist emergency personnel.

■ Incorporate a mixture of deciduous and conifer trees.

**Frequently Asked Questions(FAQs) - Lincoln County 2023 Cost-Share Program**

Q: What is the Lincoln County Hazard Reduction Cost-Share program?

A: Lincoln County Hazardous Fuels Reduction Cost-Share program is intended to provide financial support, as well as technical assistance, to aid landowners with mitigating wildfire risk. Funding and/or technical assistance is available to assist with completing defensible space and/or hazardous fuels reduction projects. The program provides cost-share funding on a reimbursement basis to help offset the costs of reducing hazardous fuels on private property.

Q: Who is an eligible applicant?

A: To be eligible, applicants must own property in Lincoln County, Montana. Grants often require that eligible properties be in a specific geographical area (targeted area) specified in the grant.

Q: How do I apply for cost-share funding?

A: First, you must request a site visit from a Lincoln County or DNRC forester. Call Jennifer Nelson, Lincoln County Forester at (406)283-2322 or Jeremy Rank at (406)293-2711 to setup a visit. After the forester has met with you and viewed the property, the forester will decide if the property needs fuels reduction or home ignition zone (HIZ) treatment, and will provide you with a report describing the condition of your land and the recommended treatments. After reviewing the site visit report, if you decide that you would like to apply, fill out the Lincoln County’s 2020 Cost-Share Program Application provided by the forester and return it to the address provided on the application along with a copy of the forester’s report.

Q: I have returned my Cost-Share Application, what are the next steps?

A. Your application will be reviewed to determine if the property is eligible for a cost-share program. If funding is available and your application is approved, a forester will contact you and begin working with you to design your fuels reduction project. Your forester will develop a Map and Scope of Work (SOW) for your project. The SOW will explain what treatments are needed and the standards your project will need to meet and complete to receive reimbursement. Additionally, the forester will provide information about the budget that will be allowed for the type of work that needed to meet the program standards. The budget will include allowable costs for allowable treatments, the percentage paid by the cost-share program and the minimum amount you will be responsible for as part of the cost-share program. Contractor bids may be obtained once you and the forester have discussed the SOW and your budget has been determined if you plan to hire out the work.

Q: How will my cost-share amount be determined?

A: Exact reimbursement amounts are specific to each project, based on treatment needs and acres of treatment. All applicants are responsible for providing matching funds (out-of-pocket cost) for their project. At a minimum, landowners will be financially responsible for 25% of the total project cost, and possibly more. Landowners are required to pay for the full project cost and get reimbursed at the completion of the project. Reimbursement amounts may be less than 75% of the total project cost and will not exceed 75%.

Q: Are there additional costs not covered by the grant?

There can be if you choose to do work in addition to the agreed upon treatments and treatment area as specified in your agreement. Any work that you do or a contractor does that is not part of the provided SOW in the contract, or is agreed to in an addendum to the contract, will be entirely your responsibility.

Q. How do I get a contractor to bid on and complete my fuels reduction project?

A: It is recommended that you get three bids from contractors of your choice. Your forester can help you find interested contractors if you don’t have some in mind.

Q: How will I be notified of my cost-share amount?

Landowners are notified of their awarded amounts in an official Award Agreement.

Q: When can my fuels reduction project start?

A: Lincoln County requires that a valid Award Agreement signed by the landowner (or an authorized representative) is on file prior to starting work on your project. By signing and returning your Award Agreement you are agreeing to program requirements and your awarded reimbursement amount.

Q: Can I apply for cost-share funding and do the work myself?

A: Yes, landowners are permitted to do their own work, but they are responsible to meet the timeline for completion and meeting all other terms of the contract including the SOW.

Q: To receive grant funding will I be required to do any additional wildfire mitigation activities?

A: Yes. Home ignitions during a wildfire can be caused by ember showers and fire brands igniting flammable material within the Home Ignition Zone. Because of this, Lincoln County requires you to complete any applicable Home Ignition Zone activities to receive your Cost-Share reimbursement. These activities include moving firewood piles away from the house, mowing grasses, raking pine needles, and/or removing flammables from underneath elevated decking. These items will also be inspected by the field forester during a final compliance inspection when the fuels mitigation work is completed.

Q: When should I contact my selected contractor?

A: After you sign and return your Award Agreement, please call your selected contractor to schedule the work or talk with your Project Administrator about coordinating the work with your contractor.

Q: When the project is complete, who pays the contractor?

A: This is a reimbursement program and, therefore, you are responsible for paying the contractor in full. DO NOT pay your contractor until your forester has performed a final compliance inspection and has approved the work. We recommend, but do not require, that you have a written agreement with the contractor.

Q: How long do I have to complete my project?

A: The completion deadline for your project will be stated in the Award Agreement.

Q: How quickly will I receive my reimbursement?

A: Once your forester has completed a final project compliance inspection of the project, and the forester deems the work is completed, you will need to submit a copy of the contractor’s paid invoice to your forester, as cost-share grants are reimbursable grants. If you did the fuels reduction work yourself, your forester will submit the final paperwork to the county. Payments will be sent to your mailing address within 30 business days.

Q: Will I be required to do post project maintenance?

A: Yes. Lincoln County expects you to make a ‘good faith’ effort to maintain your fuels reduction project. Over time treated vegetation will regrow and your mitigated fire risk will return. By being proactive, you can easily maintain your project. A simple set of pruning shears, a hand saw, or a weed whacker can remove regenerating or encroaching fuels.

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**For Lincoln County Use Only**

Project Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Funding\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Project #: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**2023 COST-SHARE APPLICATION FORM**

**APPLICANT INFORMATION**

|  |
| --- |
| **Landowner Name:** |
| **Mailing Address:**  City/Town: State: Zip: |
| **Landowner Contact Information:**    Home Phone: Cell Phone: email: |
| **Landowner Representative Name and Information (if applicable):**  Name:  Home Phone: Cell Phone: email: |

**PURPOSE** (check all that apply)

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Wildfire Risk Reduction (fuels): □ 2. Home Ignition Zone (HIZ): □ |

**PROPERTY INFORMATION**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Property Address:** | |
| **Legal Description:**  Subdivision Name and Lot Number or Geographic Location:    Section Township Range | |
| **Property Acres (total):** | **Estimated Acres in need of treatment:** |
| **Residence on property:** Yes No If yes, is it a primary residence: Yes No | |
| **Approximate number of residences adjacent or near (¼ mile) your property:** | |
| **Does your property provide an easement for access for another property:** Yes No | |
| **Is this property located within a Rural Fire District (RFD), a Fire Service Area (FSA) or an area served by a Fire Protection Company (FPC):** Yes No  If yes, provide the name of the RFD, FSA or FPC: | |
| **Are you participating or have you participated in a fuel reduction/HIZ cost-share program for the property listed above:** Yes No If yes, when: | |
| **Have you completed a site visit with a DNRC forester or a County forester:** Yes No  If yes, provide a copy of your Wellness Report with this application.  If no, contact the **Lincoln County Forester at (406)283-2322** to arrange for a site visit. | |

***This application does not confirm a grant award. Upon approval from Lincoln County, landowners will be required to sign a cost-share agreement and treatment plan that states the terms for payment and work to be completed. Any work completed prior to an agreement approval is not eligible for funding.***

**Please read each statement carefully and initial in the space provided. By initialing, you are stating**

**that you understand and agree to the terms and conditions of Lincoln County’s Cost-Share Program.**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_FAQ’s: I have read and understand the “Frequently Asked Questions” (attached)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Cost-Share Funding: I understand the following:

• I am responsible for providing matching funds to this project, at a minimum, 25% of the total project cost.

• Exact reimbursement amounts are specific to my project and I will be notified of my awarded amount in an official Award Agreement.

• My reimbursement from Lincoln County may be less than 75% of the total project cost and will not exceed 75% of the total project cost.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Reimbursement: I understand that this is a reimbursement program and that I will be responsible for full initial payment to the selected contractor and I will be reimbursed by Lincoln County upon the submission of final paperwork. Reimbursements from Lincoln County typically takes 30 – 45 business days.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Map, Scope & Project Marking: I understand that in order to be eligible for cost-share funding

through this program, I need to consult with a County or DNRC forester and the following will be developed from my project:

• Project Map: a detailed map of the project and treatment area(s).

• Scope of Work (SOW): a detailed description of the project, including specifications and performance standards.

• Project Marking: to ensure common understanding of project requirements, projects may need to be marked using forestry paint and/or flagging.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Project Photos: I understand that pre- and post-project photos will be taken of my project. I give consent to the County or DNRC forester to take, use, and publish any photos of my property.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Bids: I understand that Lincoln County strongly recommends getting bids for my project from several contractors and obtaining at least three bids, if feasible. I understand a Lincoln County or DNRC forester may be available to assisted me in obtaining bids.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Contractor Selection: I understand that I will be able to choose which contractor I want to hire to complete wildfire mitigation project. I am making a direct agreement with the hired contractor and understand that Lincoln County does not attest to the validity of the information provided by the contractor in the bids.

\_\_\_\_\_Award Agreement: I understand that if my application and final project plan are approved for

funding, I will receive an Award Agreement that will identify the exact cost-share percentage for my project as well as other details and expectations. I understand that I will not be eligible for any cost-share reimbursement payments for any work done prior to OR without signing a valid Award Agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Activities: I understand that to receive final reimbursement from Lincoln County, I will be required to perform the following tasks (if applicable) to reduce the likelihood of home ignition during a wildfire:

• Relocating my firewood pile(s) at least 30 feet away from my home during summer months.

• Mowing or weed-whacking grass to a height of six inches or less for at least the first 15 feet surrounding my home.

• Removing pine needles and other flammable debris from around my home, roof or gutters.

• Removing flammable material from underneath any elevated decking.

\_\_\_\_\_Reimbursement Requests: I understand that I will be required to submit reimbursement

forms to Lincoln County at the completion of my project to receive reimbursement. These reimbursement request forms will be provided to me in my Award Agreement and include an In-Kind Tracking form that documents the time I spend doing the above listed activities, or any other activities related to the completion of my project, and a Final Checklist that I will initial to indicate I have completed the requirements of the Cost-Share Program.

\_\_\_\_\_Project Maintenance: I understand that Lincoln County is expecting me to make a ‘good faith’ effort to maintain my project through cutting vegetation as it regrows, as well as any other activities that serve to reduce wildfire risk that have been required or recommended as a part of this project. I understand that two (2) years after the completion of my project, the Lincoln County Forester will be contacting me to schedule a follow-up project maintenance site visit, and I agree to willingly participate in that site visit. I understand that if I no longer own this property, there is no obligation on the part of the new owner(s).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_understand and agree to the Lincoln County  (Print Name)  Cost-Share Program Requirements listed above and certify that this application is, to the best of my knowledge, complete and accurate.  Applicant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | |
| Lincoln County Internal Use only (Date Application was received and initials) |  |

Return form to: Lincoln County Forester, 512 California Ave. #13, Libby, MT 59923 Phone: 406-283-2322, email: jnelson@libby.org

*The funding for this project is derived in full or in part from a federal award of the U.S. Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, sub-awarded by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Forestry Division. In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*