



**NEVADA
COUNTY**
CALIFORNIA

**Office of Emergency
Services**

Critical Evacuation Roadside Hazardous Vegetation Removal Microgrant – 2025

Competitive Grant Program

April 28, 2025

OES continually identifies situations or conditions that have the potential of causing injury to people, and damage to property or the environment. OES assesses the potential risks and consequences of incidents that could result from exposure to a variety of hazardous situations.

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Introduction

Background

As a product of the [Roadmap to Resilience](#), the Nevada County Office of Emergency Services (OES) developed core planning documents to collaboratively identify hazards and define actionable priorities throughout the county. As a result, the 2025 [Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#), 2024 [Evacuation Study](#) and the 2024 [Local Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) all highlight the importance of improving evacuation routes to support public safety.

Nearly 2,240 miles of road in Nevada County are privately owned, many of which are narrow, unpaved, and bordered with overgrown vegetation. These conditions can create extraordinarily perilous situations during wildfire events, potentially risking the lives of citizens and first responders.

The intent of the Critical Evacuation Roadside Hazardous Fuel Vegetation Removal Program is to improve evacuation routes preferably on private roadways thereby facilitating efficient and safe ingress/egress in the event of a wildfire. This will have a two-fold benefit to community members: (1) residents will be able to evacuate more efficiently in the event of a wildfire, decreasing the probability of entrapment, injury, or death, and (2) first responders and fire suppression personnel will be able to more efficiently enter an affected area to assist in evacuations and conduct wildfire suppression activities.

Program Funding

Through Congressionally Directed Spending in 2024, OES received an award of \$750,000 for Community Project Funds through the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region Fire and Aviation Management. This Domestic Grant charged Nevada County with administering a Critical Evacuation Route Hazardous Vegetation Removal Microgrant Program.

For successful applicants, OES will provide environmental compliance permitting services and coordinate the assignment and management of vegetation management vendors from its Qualified Vendors List. Grant funds will not be transmitted between the County and successful applicants.

Project Applicants are required to provide 1:1 match for their proposed project costs. Applicants are permitted, but not required, to utilize in-kind volunteer work to satisfy the match requirement. Refer to the Program Requirements, Equity Match Requirement section more details on match.

Program Priorities

The priority of the Critical Evacuation Route Hazardous Vegetation Removal program is to have qualified applicants develop a project proposal aimed at improving evacuation route safety using vegetation management practices along existing road infrastructure.

This program is intended to co-facilitate a “first pass”, or initial treatment, thereby lowering future resource inputs for ongoing, routine maintenance by the applicant or landowner. In offering this program, OES’ goal is to help communities overcome the burdensome costs of initial treatment and set them up for success in implementing future maintenance treatments to sustain safe egress and ingress during emergencies.

Program Information

Applicant Eligibility

This program is being offered to organized, community-based groups such as Firewise communities, road associations, HOAs, local agencies, Tribal groups, schools, and non-profit entities. **Preference will be given to projects occurring on privately maintained roads.**

Only one application will be accepted per organization/entity.

Project Eligibility

Projects must meet all of the following criteria to be considered eligible:

- Located within the County of Nevada
- Must *not* be located on federal land
- Must result in a marked improvement of safety for emergency ingress/egress through the reduction of hazardous roadside vegetation

Total estimated project costs must be between \$20,000 and \$120,000 including the in-kind match requirement.

Activity Eligibility

Roadside Hazardous Vegetation Removal shall be the primary activity proposed by the applicant. Hazardous Vegetation (fuels) are defined by CAL FIRE as "...live and dead vegetation that has accumulated and increases the likelihood of unusually large wildland fires...".

In general, roadside treatments should extend no fewer than 30 feet from each edge of the road to provide adequate ingress/egress in the event of an emergency. Applicants must determine the appropriate treatment width at their own discretion.

Eligible Costs

Examples of vegetation removal include, but are not limited to:

- Manual methods to remove trees and brush such as:
 - Hand/chainsaw cutting
 - Lopping
 - Mowing
 - Pruning
 - Piling and burning
- Mechanical methods to remove trees and brush such as:
 - Mastication
 - Chipping
 - Brushing

Ineligible Costs

Examples of ineligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- Costs for developing a proposal
- Costs not directly associated with the proposed project
- Costs incurred prior or after the grant period
- Costs associated with defensible space requirements (within 100' of a structure) as required by PRC 4291 and Nevada County Ordinance 2521
- Costs associated with landscaping
- Road improvements such as paving, grading, rocking, or water drainage feature replacement

Environmental Compliance

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) applies to this program and all proposed activities. OES intends to file an exemption or suspension for successful projects, therefore proposed project activities must be included or closely related to those listed in "Eligible Activities" above.

Program Requirements

Landowner Commitment

A critical element of this program is securing a commitment from landowner(s) where treatment is proposed to occur. Letters from participating landowners must include, at minimum:

- Landowner name, address, APN number, and signature
- Acknowledgement that they've been contacted by the applicant and support the project
- They are voluntarily willing to participate in the proposed project, as defined by the Project Design
- If a project is successful, they are willing to sign a required Right of Entry (ROE) permit to allow treatment on their parcel
- They are aware that post-implementation maintenance is the responsibility of the landowner and/or applicant

Landowners may elect to opt-in after a project is awarded, but participation will be scored with the initial application.

Right of Entry

In addition to Landowner Commitment letters, awarded projects will require a subsequent Right of Entry/Acceptance of Services agreement from each landowner in the project area. These will permit access by Nevada County, its officers, employees, agents, contractors, subcontractors, and permitting vegetation management services on the parcels they own.

Based on the [Governor's State of Emergency Proclamation](#), OES may apply for a suspension request from certain State statutory and regulatory requirements to expedite critical fuels reduction projects. In this case, when requested, reasonable access must be provided to the Water Boards, CDFW, CCC, CARB, and/or CAL FIRE staff for the purpose of performing inspections and conducting monitoring, including sample collection, measuring, and photographing, videotaping, and recording to determine proper implementation of management practices.

A template agreement will be provided to applicants so landowners can review an example prior to committing to/supporting the project.

Encroachment Permitting

Successful applicants will be required to procure an [Encroachment Permit](#) from the Nevada County Public Works Department prior to conducting any form of vegetation management work on public rights of way. The cost of this permit and the time taken to acquire the permit can be counted towards the applicant's equity match. More information can be found on the [Microgrant webpage](#).

Equity Match Requirement

All projects will require 1:1 in-kind match. For example, if your proposed project has an estimated cost of \$20,000, OES will provide \$10,000 in services and applicants will be required to provide \$10,000 of in-kind match.

Efforts and activities that transpired prior to being awarded will *not* apply. Only after a grant is awarded will Match efforts be applicable

All match commitments must be fully deployed and verified by OES *before* OES will dispatch vegetation management vendors to your project site.

Allowable Types of Match

Cash

The applicant's organization may count non-ground disturbing vegetation management costs towards their in-kind match contribution. Costs must be directly related to the project and may include expenses such as equipment rental fees, lubricants, fuel, etc. Successful applicants will be required to submit receipts for actual costs prior to OES dispatching vegetation management vendors to the project site.

Volunteer Match

Applicants and their associates are permitted to dedicate volunteer work on the project as in-kind match. Volunteer match must meet the following requirements:

- The value of volunteer activities is set at \$38.61/hour/adult, per the [Independent Sector](#)
- Personally owned equipment that is non-ground disturbing may be utilized and is subject to an additional hourly rate, per [FEMA guidelines](#):
 - Chainsaws - \$2.02/hour/saw
 - Pole saws - \$2.76/hour/saw
 - Roadside chipper - \$72.28/hour/machine
- All match must be recorded on the Match Declaration template and summarized on the Budget template (available on the [Microgrant webpage](#)).
- Types of volunteer activities include, but are not limited to:
 - Acquiring Right of Entry Forms
 - Acquiring Encroachment permits, when required
 - Conducting non-ground disturbing vegetation management activities on the proposed project
 - Organizing and planning project implementation
 - Flagging project boundaries
 - Establishing photo points. See the [Microgrant webpage](#) for a Virtual Office Hours recording dedicated to establishing photo points
 - Collecting estimates from licensed vegetation management contractors

Additional Grant Leverage

If an applicant's proposed project has received funding from a separate grant source, it may be counted as match. A copy of the signed grant agreement will be required by OES.

Vegetation Treatment Estimates

For each proposed grant-funded vegetation treatment activity, applicants must procure at least two estimates from a licensed vegetation management contractor. Please keep in mind that these estimates

do not necessarily constitute any sort of commitment from OES to utilize the contractor's services. These estimates will be used by the applicant to develop their budget and estimate project costs.

Long-Term Management

As this program is intended to supplement efforts by local groups or organizations, the expectation is that long-term management, maintenance, and stewardship shall be performed by the applicant and/or landowner(s). Applicants are required to outline a long-term management plan for the proposed project. This document should include details about timing, description of methods, implementing group(s), and sources of funding. In lieu, Firewise Communities may submit copies of their current Three-year Action Plan and Risk Assessment.

Reporting

Pre-implementation

Prior to OES orchestrating vegetation management work on a project, successful applicants will be required to report to OES. This report must include, at minimum:

- The status of their Right of Entry agreements
- Documentation/demonstration of the implemented Equity Match, including documentation of all volunteer hours deployed
- Receipts for any costs incurred which will be used as Equity Match

Post-implementation

After OES has coordinated vegetation management services for projects, the applicant will be required to deliver a final report to OES using the provided template. This report must include, at minimum:

- Total acres treated and treatment type by acres
- Total road feet treated and treatment type by feet
- At least three photos taken from the established photo points in the pre-implementation phase. See the [Microgrant webpage](#) for a Virtual Office Hours recording dedicated to establishing photo points
- A brief narrative regarding the project outcome

Program Process

Proposal Development

Proposals are to be developed by an eligible entity and submitted to OES through the [Microgrant webpage](#)'s application system. **Applications will be deemed 'Final' once submitted and can not be edited or recalled.**

Application Details

The application period will be open for a term of 60 days and is slated to close on June 27 at 5:30pm Pacific.

Disqualifications

Applications may be disqualified for any reason deemed necessary by the Evaluation Team, including, but not limited to the following reasons:

- Applications missing any stated requirements will not be considered for funding
- Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed
- Ineligible applicants
- Ineligible activities

General Information for the applicant (Required)

Organization name, organization type, primary point of contact, address, phone, email. These will be conveyed on fillable fields.

If you applying on behalf of a Firewise Community? (Required)

If so, which FWC? FWC applicants shall submit copies of their latest Three-year Action Plan and Risk Assessment. This will allow the submission of documents.

Project Map (Required)

Applicants will be required to submit a map using the Mapping Tool linked on the [Microgrant webpage](#). This tool will assist applicants in generating additional information required later in the application.

Additional maps or map files may be submitted but are not required.

Project Background Narrative (Required)

Location, need, current condition of the project area, etc. Responses will be limited to 400 words.

Evacuation Zone and Community Wildfire Protection Plan forecast zone information will be fillable fields.

Project Design Narrative (Required)

Treatment types, specifications, road segment length, treatment area, project schedule, intended deliverables, collaboration (number of parcels). Responses will be limited to 400 words.

A list of Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APN) for each parcel involved in the proposed project will need to be submitted.

Budget template and match

Responses must be on the provided Budget Template, Match Declaration template, and submitted. Templates can be found on the [Microgrant webpage](#). Estimates from contractors for the proposed grant-funded treatment must be submitted. Budget and match narrative is limited to 300 words.

Vegetation Treatment Contractor Estimates

Applicants must submit no fewer than two estimates for each treatment that they're requesting grant funding for.

Long-term management plan

If a three-year action plan is not available, a long-term management plan can be submitted or described. Established plan documents have no word limit, and typed responses are limited to 300 words.

Pre-implementation photo points (Required)

Applicants must submit three photo points of their proposed project area with their application. For more information on establishing adequate photo points, please visit the [Microgrant webpage](#) and review the Virtual Office Hours discussion on Photo Points.

Verifications and Declarations (Required)

Applicants are required to self-certify that they have attended a virtual OES Grant Workshop. Applicants must self-certify that they've attended a Virtual Office Hours for general guidance on proposal development. See the [Microgrant webpage](#) for more information.

Evaluation Process

Proposals will be collected and organized into 'bins' according to the level of requested grant funding. Bins will be defined by the distribution of requested grant funding to promote a less biased comparative analysis of proposals.

The evaluation process will be conducted by a team of five interdisciplinary professionals. Each team member will independently score every proposal and assign a score based on the Evaluation Criteria below. The final score for a proposal will be calculated by averaging the score from each evaluation team member.

Evaluation Criteria

Project Background, 25 points

- Specific location
- Clearly demonstrated need
- Alignment with the Program Priorities
- Potential for community-scale benefit
- Proximity to a Disadvantaged Community
- Alignment with other County Strategies (LHMP, CWPP, Evac Study, etc.)

Project Design, 45 points

- Implementation Plan
 - Treatment method(s)
 - Schedule
 - Deliverables
- Area and linear quantification
- Budget
 - Estimates for treatment – must provide copies of two estimates for the proposed grant-funded treatment on the contractor’s official letterhead or estimate sheet
 - Description of match commitment
- Readiness
- Likelihood of success
- Long-term management plans

Collaboration, 30 points

- Landowner commitment
 - Letters of commitment
- Letters of support from community leaders or officials (optional)
- Collaboration with or proximity to other local wildfire hazard reduction initiatives

Applicant Support, Grant Award, and Project Implementation

Applicant Support

OES will provide four Virtual Office Hour sessions to assist applicants. Please see the [Microgrant webpage](#) for a list of topics, dates, times, and meeting invitation links.

In addition to the Virtual Office Hour sessions, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) will be developed and routinely updated as a resource to applicants.

In the event that these Grant Guidelines, the Virtual Office Hours, nor the FAQ answer an applicant's question, an email can be sent to oes@nevadacountyca.gov with "Microgrant" in the email's subject line.

Grant Award

OES anticipates notifying successful applicants within 60 days of the application submission deadline. At that time, applicants will be supplied with a formal notification, ROE template, green waste and/or biomass disposal information.

Project Implementation

OES will utilize the Vegetation Treatment Qualified List of vendors to assign task orders and schedule treatment activities. There will be no monetary exchange with applicants. Applicants are to initiate or deploy match resources no sooner than the formal award notification date and should initiate aforementioned match as soon as possible.

As of the date of this publication, Federal spending has been suspended and a release date has not been provided by the Federal Government. OES is moving forward with this Program to develop "shovel-ready" projects in anticipation for eventual funding.