COMMUNITY RESILIENCY INVESTMENT PROGRAM - COLUMBIA BASIN WILDFIRE RESILIENCY INITIATIVE (CRI-CBWRI)

Program Guide

This guide identifies the types of projects that are eligible for the Community Resiliency Investment Program - Columbia Basin Wildfire Resiliency Initiative (CRI-CBWRI) and gives you information on how to complete an application.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. WHAT IS CRI-CBWRI?

This Program builds community capacity and strengthens wildfire resilience and wildfire risk reduction in the Columbia Basin Trust region (the Basin) as it relates to the seven FireSmart™ [1] disciplines. The Community Resiliency Investment (CRI) Program - Columbia Basin Wildfire Resiliency Initiative (CBWRI – the Program) is a partnership between the BC Wildfire Service (BCWS), its partners within the Ministry of Forests (FOR), and Columbia Basin Trust (the Trust).

The Program focuses on projects that build community capacity and contribute to wildfire resiliency outcomes, particularly in rural and First Nation communities with demonstrated wildfire risk in the Basin. The Program supports:

- Activities related to the seven FireSmart disciplines working towards wildfire resiliency that are complementary to those supported through other CRI programs;
- Fuel management demonstration, innovation and maintenance projects in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) including provincial Crown land, local government-owned land, and/or First Nation land;
- Cultural and prescribed fire to support community wildfire risk reduction on local government-owned land, and/or First Nations land; and
- Training and skills development at the local level so communities may become more empowered to manage wildfire interface risks and implement community-led solutions.

FOR and the Trust jointly developed this Basin Program to complement existing Provincial CRI initiatives. Both the Trust and FOR staff provide guidance through the CBWRI Management Committee and adjudicate applications through the CBWRI Evaluation Committee.

The Trust administers Program funds, offers Wildfire Advisor services to support applicants in navigating the application process, and enters into Contribution Agreements with successful project applicants.

2. WHO CAN APPLY?

Applicants must be located in the Columbia Basin Trust region.

Eligible applicants include:

- Registered non-profits from communities with identified wildfire risk reduction need;
- Legally incorporated society-run fire departments and brigades;
- First Nations communities;
- Post-secondary institutions; and
- Local governments (municipalities or regional districts).

Applicants operating outside of the Basin must partner with eligible applicants in the Basin and demonstrate that proposed projects reduce wildfire risk to communities in the Basin.

The project must demonstrate that it will directly benefit the Basin or a Basin community, and that the primary beneficiary is neither the applicant nor solely the members of a membership-based organization.

3. WHEN IS THE APPLICATION DEADLINE?

Eligible applicants must apply for new projects by **November 4, 2025, at 2:00 PM PT / 3:00 PM MT**.

[1] FireSmart, Intelli-feu and other associated Marks are trademarks of the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre.

4. WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR FUNDING?

Applicants must demonstrate the extent to which the proposed project will support local community capacity to address wildfire resiliency, reduce wildfire risks and adhere to the following requirements:

- Be a new project or new project phase (retroactive funding is not eligible);
- Be completed within two years 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, an application to the Provincial CRI program may be required, and partial funding through this Trust Program may be considered;
- Be connected and complementary to ongoing regional FireSmart work;
- 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 in the project as applicable.

Projects that include fuel management activities must also adhere to additional requirements. See Sections 7 and 8 of this Program Guide for complete details.

5. WHAT TYPES OF SUPPORT ARE PROVIDED?

Advisory services are provided by the Trust's Wildfire Advisors to help eligible applicants navigate the application process. All applicants are required to speak with a Wildfire Advisor about their project idea before submission.

Rural communities (population of less than 5,000), unincorporated areas and First Nations communities are eligible to receive additional advisory and project development support. Advisors can assist in the identification of community priorities and project opportunities that build local capacity to reduce wildfire risks and improve wildfire resiliency. Advisors may also provide support from project implementation to completion.

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 align with at least one of the four broad categories described below.

1. **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, coordination and administration of Community FireSmart Resiliency Collaboratives (CFRC) where a demonstrated gap exists. Unincorporated communities that are ineligible for support in other CRI programs may apply for support to hire and train a CFRC Coordinator.
- Hiring a qualified Local FireSmart Representative and/or Wildfire Mitigation Specialist, to undertake the following activities:
    - Conduct Home Ignition Zone Assessments and/or Wildfire Mitigation Program Assessments;

- Conduct Critical Infrastructure Assessments;
    - Conduct Drinking Water System Infrastructure Vulnerability Assessments;
    - Facilitate Farm and Ranch Wildfire Plan preparation utilizing the Farm and Ranch Guide;
    - Deliver Neighbourhood Champion workshops;
    - Assist with the FireSmart Canada Neighbourhood Recognition Program or the FireSmart BC Local FireSmart Collective Program (launching March 2026).
- Integrating wildfire resiliency into community emergency preparedness, such as:
    - Incremental planning activities (e.g. tabletop training and scenarios);
    - Promotion of wildfire preparedness resources and checklists; and
    - Review of evacuation procedures (e.g. communications, access/egress).

These must not include developing or significantly updating an emergency plan as legislated by the Emergency and Disaster Management Act and applicable legislation.

2. **Fuel management demonstration and innovation projects that raise community FireSmart awareness and target known high risk interface areas, with an emphasis on rural and underserved areas.**

   Project activities can include, but are not limited to:

   - Coordinating prescription and fuel management approaches that align with Community Wildfire Resiliency Plans (CWRP) and District Wildland Urban Interface–Wildfire Risk Reduction (WUI-WRR) plans and address known gaps, to be developed in partnership with the Land Manager.
   - Completing operational fuel management demonstration and innovation projects, including pre-treatment, and post-treatment activities, to a cumulative maximum of 10 hectares. Projects must be directly adjacent to a community, or identified in a CWRP or WUI-WRR plan, and approved by the Land Manager. Work must not involve cutting of merchantable timber.
   - Undertaking fuel management maintenance activities on provincial Crown land directly adjacent to a community or identified in a CWRP or WUI-WRR plan, local government-owned land or First Nations land.
   - Developing innovative approaches to fuel management (e.g. mechanical mulching methods, smaller series machinery).

All fuel management projects must adhere to the current standards outlined on the Tools for Fuel Management page. Projects involving cultural or prescribed fire must also comply with all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements, including obtaining land use authorizations and burn approvals as required under the Wildfire Act and its regulations. The prescribed fire processes and associated templates are available on the Planning a Burn page.

3. **Planning and implementation for the application of cultural and prescribed fire on local government-owned land, and/or First Nations' land in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).**

   Project activities to be developed in coordination with BCWS can include, but are not limited to:

   - Engaging in joint Wildland Live Fire Training to enhance cross-training and inter-agency collaboration between local fire services and BCWS. These must be coordinated with BCWS zone staff to identify suitable training locations, obtain necessary authorizations, develop burn plans, carry out the training, and conduct a debrief to inform future training and project planning.

- Planning and development of fuel management prescriptions and prescribed fire burn plans. Planning for fuel management must be consistent with current standards and are focused on reducing wildfire risk to communities as mapped in the BCWS Wildland and Urban Interface (WUI) risk class mapping;
- All fuel management projects must adhere to the current standards outlined on the Tools for Fuel Management page. Projects involving cultural or prescribed fire must also comply with all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements, including obtaining land use authorizations and burn approvals as required under the Wildfire Act and its regulations. The prescribed fire processes and associated templates are available on the Planning a Burn page.

Note: If a cultural and prescribed fire is intended as a maintenance activity or secondary phase of a fuel management demonstration project, it must be planned and coordinated in accordance with BCWS standards and procedures.

Refer to section 7 of this guide for detailed requirements for fuel treatment projects.

4. **Skills development and capacity-building activities related to Categories 1, 2 and 3 that build community wildfire resiliency.**

   Project activities can include but are not limited to:

   - Training and skills development for wildfire risk reduction and prevention that are incremental to existing government programs; and
   - Delivery of training sessions, such as Local FireSmart Representative training and/or Wildfire Mitigation Specialist workshops to undertake FireSmart assessments.

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

Provincial Approvals

All fuel management projects involving prescriptions and/or operational fuel treatments on provincial Crown land will require preliminary approval in principle from the FOR Land Manager in your Natural Resource District and endorsement from Fire Centre Prevention team before applying, and then formal authorization before the work can commence. Written confirmation from the Province of First Nation consultation is also required.

Prior to applying for funding, applicants must commence engagement with the relevant Land Manager(s) and obtain an email to confirm preliminary approval in principle.

- For projects to be implemented in the Selkirk Resource District, contact Land and Resource Coordinator **Richard Garner**, RPF District Wildfire Specialist richard.garner@gov.bc.ca
- For projects to be implemented in the Rocky Mountain Resource District, contact District Land and Resource Specialist **Trevor Campbell**, RPF trevor.campbell@gov.bc.ca
- For projects to be implemented in the Prince George District, contact District Land and Resource Specialist **Katelan Eistetter** katelan.eistetter@gov.bc.ca

All cultural and prescribed fire projects must be discussed with a BCWS Wildfire Prevention Officer or Prevention Specialist prior to applying. Preliminary approval in principle must be obtained from BCWS zone staff to ensure alignment with required authorizations, available resource capacity, connection to existing initiatives, and overall project feasibility.

Preliminary approval in principle is required before the Trust issues notice of the funding decision.

Technical Requirements for Fuel Management Prescriptions and Burn Plans

Applicants may apply for funding to create a new prescription and/or burn plan, or to update an existing one. In addition to the above requirements, the applicant must also ensure a Fuel Management Prescription is:

- Consistent with, and meets the current requirements and recommendations set out on the standards outlined on the Tools for Fuel Management page. If the project includes cultural and prescribed fire, it must be consistent with current BCWS prescribed fire processes and must use the Burn Plan Template, all of which are available on the Planning a Burn page. Note: Authorizations from the Land Manager and approvals from a BCWS Official are required as per the Burn Plan Signature Sheet.
- Completed, signed and sealed by a qualified professional that is accredited by their professional association, then submitted to the local BCWS Wildfire Prevention Officer for review and endorsement prior to initiating operational treatment activities.

Technical Requirements for Demonstration Fuel Management Treatments

In addition to the above, the fuel treatment project must meet the following requirements:

- Demonstration and innovation projects must be smaller than traditional fuel management treatments (generally up to a cumulative maximum of 10 hectares). Fuel management projects that are larger may be considered but must be accompanied by appropriate rationale, district approval and Fire Centre endorsement and may not be prioritized;
- Fuel management activities must be located on provincial Crown land, local government-owned land or First Nations land; however, cultural and prescribed fire projects are not permitted on provincial Crown land.
- Burns must be small and for the purpose of light fuel reduction, targeting flashy fuels such as grass or needle cast, to reduce community wildfire risk.
- Management must be consistent with BCWS objectives for the project area;
- Projects must ensure compliance with applicable legislation 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);
- Activities that fall under the practice of forestry must be developed and, where applicable, signed and sealed by a forest professional that is accredited by Forest Professionals BC and operating within their scope of practice;
- Location of fuel treatment units should be visible and accessible to community members, and/or have a showcase or educational component (e.g. signage, media); and
- Fuel treatment units should address:
    - Identified Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) risk (e.g. adjacent to critical infrastructure; within 1 km of valued assets; within 2 km of community; easily accessible. Projects within 1 km of valued assets may be prioritized);
    - Access/egress routes that relate to wildfire resiliency; and/or
    - Fire risk reduction that specifically addresses the protection of critical infrastructure within domestic community watersheds. Eligible projects must be located on provincial Crown land, local government–owned land or First Nations Reserve land, and must clearly demonstrate broad community support (e.g., through engagement with local watershed

groups). Projects should be guided by a [critical infrastructure assessment] focused on mitigating wildfire impacts to community drinking water sources.

Additional Information

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**:

- Final fuel management prescription for review and endorsement by the local BCWS Fire Centre;
- Final confirmation of project approval from the Relevant Land Manager; and
- Confirmation of the development of a maintenance plan/strategy for the fuel treatment area.

In addition, successful applicants whose projects include fuel treatment components will be contractually required to:

- **Maintain insurance coverage** for all risks arising from the project in such amounts and with such insurers as are appropriate with regard to the nature of the project and the risks associated therewith;
- **Name the Trust as an additional insured on such insurance**. You will be required to provide the Trust with the cover note, certificate of insurance or copy of each policy certified by the insurer showing the Trust as an additional insured.
- **Enter spatial data for prescriptions (including signed prescription as attachment in RESULTS) and treatments into RESULTS.** Speak with a Trust Wildfire Advisor for assistance and/or refer to: RESULTS Information Submission Specifications: Government Funded Activities (PDF download).

8. WHAT TYPES OF COSTS ARE ELIGIBLE?

Eligible costs are direct costs approved by the Evaluation Committee, properly and reasonably incurred, and paid for by the applicant. These can only be incurred from the date of the signed contribution agreement until the date the final report is submitted.
Eligible activities must be cost-effective and may include:

- **Fuel management planning and prescriptions (including burn plans)**
  New plans or updates to an existing plan may include site evaluation, field reconnaissance, wildfire threat assessment plots, data collection and the evaluation of site access, lay out and traversing of proposed areas for treatments, and preparation of all reporting materials including maps and spatial data.
- **Operational fuel management projects**
  Activities include:
  - **Pre-treatment** activities such as obtaining authorizations, completing danger tree assessments, notifying First Nations and stakeholders, and completing public engagement.
  - **Treatments** such as pruning, thinning, tree falling, brushing, grazing, debris management (e.g. pile and burning), reforestation, and/or cultural and prescribed fire delivery (as per the approved burn plan).
  - **Post-treatment** follow up including data collection, signage, preparation and submission of all final report requirements, including maps, spatial data and metadata; and
  - **Fuel management maintenance activities.**

Contact a Trust wildfire advisor to confirm your treatment costs are within provincial benchmark ranges. Higher costs may be considered but must be accompanied by an appropriate rationale.

- **Skills development and training**
  To ensure safe and effective projects, funding may support first aid, Power Saw Safety, Danger Tree Assessment Certification or other pertinent training.
- **Capital purchases required for effective project delivery**
  Amounts up to $10,000 maximum from within the total funding request may be supported (e.g. hand tools and other small-scale equipment).
- **Community FireSmart and Resiliency Collaborative (CFRC) Coordinator**
  For applicants that are **ineligible** for the CRI FireSmart Community Funding and Support program (e.g. community associations, registered non-profits), funding may support this position. Please contact wildfire@ourtrust.org to describe your unique situation and assess coordinator eligibility prior to submitting an application.

The following may also be 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. securing authorizations for land management);
- Consultant costs;
- Project management costs;
- Public information/communication costs (e.g. post-treatment signage and education); and
- Other costs reasonably incurred that are directly tied to eligible project activities.

9. WHAT TYPES OF COSTS ARE NOT ELIGIBLE?

The following are not eligible for funding through this Program:

- Costs that do not directly align with the four project categories stated in Section 6 of this Guide;
- 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;
- Core or ongoing operating expenses;
- Activities supporting political parties, advocacy or lobby groups or organizations that are exclusive or discriminative in nature;
- Work undertaken by BCWS, FOR or the Trust including staff support;
- Costs directly pertaining to First Nations, municipal or regional governments' legally required emergency preparedness, response and recovery activities;
- Fuel management activities occurring on private land;
- Fire fighter suppression training above and beyond that required for fuel treatment or prescribed and cultural burn projects

Individual project eligibility is determined by the Program partners at their sole discretion. Funding must not displace or duplicate government or industry responsibility.

10. HOW MUCH WILL THE PROGRAM FUND?

Applicants can request up to 100% of total project costs, to a typical maximum amount of $200,000.

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.

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:
  - Increased and sustainable local wildfire capacity, resiliency and mitigation efforts;
  - Support for communities with high WUI risk class; and
  - Project scope addresses known gaps in existing CRI supports.
- Demonstrate achievable and measurable wildfire resiliency, planning and preparedness outcomes;
- Consider a range of values (e.g. climate, cultural, recreational, etc.);
- Demonstrate susceptibility to wildfires;
- Demonstrate longer-term community capacity building with respect to wildfire resiliency;
- Demonstrate ties with community-identified priorities for wildfire risk reduction;
- Demonstrate relevant partnerships, including strengthening cross-training and inter-agency collaboration between local fire services and BCWS;
- Demonstrate project readiness and ability to move forward within the stated timelines;
- Demonstrate cost effective budget to complete work;
- Demonstrate adherence to fuel management requirements as indicated in section 7 of this guide; and
- Address identified WUI risks (e.g. adjacent to critical infrastructure; within 1 km of valued assets; within 2 km of community; easily accessible).

Projects that take place in rural communities (populations of less than 5,000), unincorporated areas and First Nations communities with higher WUI risk class that received minimal or no prior support from the Province or the Trust to strengthen wildfire resilience and wildfire risk reduction, will be prioritized.

12. WHAT ARE THE 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 10 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

Proposed project activities should begin no earlier than **April 1, 2026**. Funding can only be put toward approved project expenses after the Contribution Agreement has been signed.

Timeframe for Implementing Approved Projects

All approved project activities are required to be completed within two years 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 the Program may 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. WHAT ARE THE FINAL REPORT REQUIREMENTS AND PROCESS?

Final reports are due within 30 days of project completion, as set-out in the Contribution Agreement.

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

- Person-hours of jobs created as a result of the grant and type of job.
- Number of hectares treated/burned.
- Project outcomes relating to local wildfire resiliency and community capacity.
- Financial summary listing revenues and expenses.
- Copies of any resources or reports that were produced with grant funding, including but not limited to training or capacity-building materials.

In addition, any information reasonably requested by the Trust.

For projects that include fuel management prescriptions and burn plans:

- Copy of the fuel management prescription, signed and sealed by a Registered Professional Forester, including all ancillary assessments (e.g. terrain stability) and approved burn plan (if applicable);
- Maps in PDF format;
- Email from the Land Manager confirming that First Nations information sharing has been completed; and
- Spatial data for prescriptions entered into RESULTS. Speak with a Trust wildfire advisor for assistance or refer to: RESULTS Information Submission Specifications: Government Funded Activities (PDF download).

For projects that include fuel management demonstration and innovation:

- 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 treatments entered into RESULTS. Speak with a Trust wildfire advisor for assistance or refer to: RESULTS Information Submission Specifications: Government Funded Activities (PDF download).

All final report materials will be shared with FOR including BCWS.

14. READY TO APPLY?

Eligible applicants must speak with the Trust to discuss your proposed project idea prior to applying. Then, follow this checklist below:

1. In addition to this Program Guide, download the relevant Program documents here:
   a. Application Guide
   b. Application Worksheet
   c. Application Submission Checklist
2. Review the Application Guide for direction and advice on how to complete the application form.
3. Optional: use the Worksheet to develop your application offline and copy and paste your answers into the online form when ready.
4. Review the Application Submission Checklist for recommendations on what to include alongside your completed application form.
5. 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 wildfire@ourtrust.org.
6. Complete the online application form.

All application materials will be shared with FOR including BCWS.

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