

**Action, Implementation &
Mitigation (AIM) Program**
Request for Concept Papers



AIM Grant Request for Concept Paper Instructions

OVERVIEW

Thank you for your interest in the *Action, Implementation, and Mitigation (AIM) Grant*.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- Read through the entire Request for Concept Paper Instructions and Concept Paper Application before constructing your responses.
- We accept applications from projects in various stages of development (design, development, and implementation).
- Each question is intended to elicit a different thoughtful response that will help reviewers understand your proposal. Please be sure you have answered the questions asked.
- All character limits include spaces. Please do not exceed these limits.
- **Priority will be given to proposals that clearly articulate how the organization's capacity will be increased versus proposals that simply treat acres.**

APPLICATION PROCESS

We encourage you to apply as soon as you are able with **the final deadline to submit Concept Paper applications on 2/24/23**. Please email your completed proposal to AIM@co-co.org. The AIM Selection Committee will begin to review applications following the **Concept Paper due date of February 24, 2023**.

If you have technical problems with the application, contact Wendie Warner (wendie.warner@co-co.org | 719-960-6866).

If you would like to discuss your proposal to see if it meets AIM's objectives, please contact: Mitch Dahlke, Wildfire Mitigation Specialist: (mitch.dahlke@co-co.org | 719-922-1749) or Morgan Cohen, Grants and Contracts Manager: (morgan.cohen@co-co.org | 719-493-3792).

Background

Coalitions & Collaboratives Inc. (COCO), a Colorado-based nonprofit, started the Action, Implementation and Mitigation (AIM) Program to accelerate fire adaptation concepts and reduce the risk from wildfire across the U.S. by increasing capacity and on-the-ground work. Since inception we have supported over 90 organizations. COCO hopes to increase community resilience, restore fire-adapted ecosystems and create safer conditions for residents and firefighters.

This funding opportunity is open to organizations working to advance wildfire risk reduction. In addition to financial assistance, COCO offers mentorship to applicants who are at a tipping point to move their program(s) or organization forward. **Homeowner associations, property owner associations, and metro districts are NOT eligible**, as this grant targets increasing organizational capacity across broader landscapes, which in turn benefits homeowner and property owner associations throughout the community.

COCO funds place-based, solution-oriented organizations, across the country that focus their work on projects that increase communities' ability to overcome barriers to successful community wildfire mitigation, multiply their efforts, achieve quantifiable outcomes, and support equitable and inclusive programs.

We believe that local solutions can solve global problems.

The AIM Grant is available for a wide variety of capacity-building activities, including personnel, equipment under \$5,000, planning efforts, and wildfire risk reduction work (on non-federal lands only). Applicants must show how their project proposal fits into the larger wildfire mitigation landscape, and are encouraged to coordinate with government partners on nearby public lands projects.

1. Eligible Organizations

- Regional and local collaborative efforts
- Fire Safe Councils and/or Wildfire Councils
- Nonprofit groups that undertake hazardous forest fuel reduction treatment projects in partnership with local, state or private entities
- Fire Departments
- Conservation Districts
- Tribal Authorities
- City or county government
- University or Colleges

Homeowner or property owner associations, metro districts, road districts, etc. are NOT eligible to apply regardless of nonprofit or tax status.

Expectations

- The community and/or project area must be considered at moderate to high-risk from wildfire and be in reasonable proximity to public lands. Applicants are encouraged to work with local federal personnel (USFS/BLM/NPS/BIA) in determining where federal treatments are planned for the WUI and how to best coordinate AIM project work on non-federal lands in proximity to federal treatment areas (past or future). While risk is subjective, we expect the applicant to explain how risk, and the values at risk, have been identified within their proposal.
- Proposals must lead to a meaningful increase in local capacity and on-the-ground wildfire risk reduction activities.
- The county, community or fire district should have an approved Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) or Wildfire Risk Assessment covering the project area, or have one underway.

Organizations must:

- Be open to feedback and guidance from COCO on proposed mitigation projects.
- Be willing to share their lessons, challenges and successes.
- Comply with all grant reporting requirements and meet project completion milestones and deadlines.
- Participate in several AIM calls and reporting throughout the duration of the project.

Applicants must contribute:

- A 100% non-federal match (cash or in-kind match is eligible) for a 1:1 grant to match ratio.
- If fuel reduction occurs on private property, a 50% cash match from residents is required. The other 50% match can be either in-kind or cash.
- If supporting disadvantaged, underserved or at-risk populations, in moderate/high-risk areas the 50% cash match may be reduced, however the applicant must still show a 100% match to the total project budget, and the request must be explained in detail and approved.
- COCO requires applicants to explain the process used to identify underserved, at-risk, and/or disadvantaged populations, including an application process and/or income threshold.
- Award funding will range from \$10,000 - \$75,000. AIM awards are on a 12-month timeline. **The anticipated funding award start date is May, 2023.**

2. AIM Grant Purpose

Project proposals must fit within one or more of the following categories:

A. Personnel Capacity

COCO recognizes that it is difficult, if not impossible, to complete projects without adequate staffing, whether that be someone to run incentive programs, motivate residents, conduct wildfire risk assessments, lay out projects, or respond to requests for assistance. If your proposal is seeking funding for a staff position, articulate how that position will increase your capacity for accomplishing on-the-ground work, and your plans to sustain that position over time.

B. Planning Efforts*

COCO recognizes how valuable planning efforts like Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) and Community Wildfire Risk Assessments can be, especially when developed collaboratively with a wide array of stakeholders and partners. Applicants should discuss their capacity to facilitate such planning efforts, how the effort fits into their overall work program, and how the planning effort will help advance their on-the-ground wildfire mitigation efforts. Efforts like the development of prescribed burn plans also fit into this category. COCO supports cross-boundary collaboration, however AIM funding cannot be used for planning projects that focus exclusively, or primarily, on federal lands.

**When applying for funding to support an update to an existing plan, please explain what was accomplished since the initial plan's creation and why the plan needs to be updated. Simply stating that the plan is outdated is not sufficient to explain why a new plan is needed. Discuss who will lead the implementation effort.*

C. Reduction of Hazardous Fuels

Hazardous fuel reduction / forest management projects should be strategic, at an impactful scale, on or adjacent to moderate/high wildfire risk areas near public lands, designed to limit the potential risk to life, property, infrastructure, and other high-valued assets. COCO places a preference on projects which prioritize community values and assets first.

Effective mitigation treatments may be implemented across jurisdictional boundaries on non-federal land. All projects within this focus area must clearly articulate why the funding is not available from another source, how it leverages other funding opportunities, or meets a shortfall, and how the project is an essential component to the overall mitigation strategy for the area.

Applicants should consider all elements required to implement treatments on-the-ground, including acquiring necessary permits and consultations. *Priority will be given to proposals that clearly articulate how the organization's capacity will be increased versus proposals that simply treat acres.*

D. Equipment purchases under a total value of \$5,000

If seeking funding for equipment/supplies please describe the following:

- Discuss how you plan to use and maintain the equipment.
- Explain how adding this equipment/these supplies to your organization will increase your capacity.
- If applicable, identify the staff members that are qualified or will be trained to operate the equipment.

Examples of successfully funded programs:*

The list below highlights projects and programs that COCO has funded in the past.

- Hiring a Mitigation Coordinator or fuels/forestry staff to increase on-the-ground mitigation activities
- Hiring staff to develop or manage a chipping or slash-disposal program
- Hiring staff to conduct home site assessments
- Hiring administrative staff to assist with grant reimbursement requests and reporting, especially if it frees up time for technical specialists or the Executive Director
- Providing training programs for homeowners, fire department personnel or others specific to mitigation activities (chainsaw training, Mitigation Best Practices, prescribed fire or other pertinent training)
- Developing a wildfire mitigation collaborative (i.e. paying for facilitator or staff)
- Creating defensible space around homes and structures, based on approved defensible space guidelines
- Constructing fuel breaks, based on approved guidelines
- Reducing fuels beyond defensible space, especially designed to reduce fire intensity and protect water supplies or other valued resources
- Removing usable materials with specific utilization plans; removal of slash including chipping, mulching, grinding, or mechanical removal
- Developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans or Community Wildfire Risk Assessments that identify wildfire risk and make specific recommendations on ways to improve wildfire preparedness and define areas in need of treatment
- Equipment purchases to support the larger community wildfire mitigation program of work (Computers, software, and GPS Units under \$5,000 /mitigation equipment or mitigation supplies under \$5,000 such as chainsaws or trailers).
- Developing prescribed fire burn plans
- Prescribed burning, pile burning, or broadcast burning

Examples of Projects that **DO NOT** qualify for this funding opportunity:

- Grant writing
- Suppression programs or projects (i.e. purchase of fire fighting equipment and/or fire training, development of a wildland module)
- Construction of permanent infrastructure (i.e. buildings or road construction)
- Local, state or federal policy development or advocacy
- Projects undertaken by and benefiting only one (1) individual property owner
- Projects on federal lands
- Mitigation projects reducing risk on private land that do not meet the 50% cash match requirement (Exceptions may be made for projects that include supporting disadvantaged communities and at-risk populations. See Matching Funds #5 below.)
- Prevention messaging (reducing human-caused ignition) or development and printing of brochures for education purposes

**To learn more about our current and past awardees and their work please visit our website <https://co-co.org/programs/aim-partnership/>.*

3. Coordination Efforts

Applicants must coordinate proposed projects with relevant county, state or federal officials to ensure consistency with county-level wildfire risk-reduction activities. The application should identify which officials were consulted and the outcome of those discussions. ***Applicants must provide two letters of support with your Final application.*** Letters of support should be from local officials and key partners who understand how the project will benefit your program and move mitigation efforts forward in your area (i.e. Board of County Commissioners, Emergency Manager, Tribal Leader, Fire Chief, USFS, State Forestry, BLM, etc.). Letters should not be from contractors that you might potentially hire. ***Letters of support are NOT due with your Concept Paper submission, and will only be asked for if you are invited to submit a Final Application.***

4. Geography Relevant to Federal Land (informational)

Applicants must demonstrate that their proposed project will take place in close proximity to, or adjacent to, U.S. Forest Service (USFS) or other federal public lands projects that are planned and/or previously treated. Maps identifying current, recent and proposed projects should be available through your local USFS/BLM/NPS/BIA/Tribal offices. A map showing identified wildfire risk for your project area is also critical and ***is required with your application.*** Your local state forest service office or federal land manager may be able to assist you with developing maps if you do not currently have that capability.

5. Matching Funds

All applicants will be required to demonstrate an ability to match 100% of requested grant resources. The match may be in the form of a private or state dollar-for-dollar match. Proposals that demonstrate a local investment, like County, City or Fire Department funding, or a local resident contribution will be given stronger consideration. If your proposal involves a chipping program, slash removal, cost-share program, and/or mitigation work on private property, the awardee must document at least a **50% cash match** from the home or property owner. The other 50% match can be either in-kind or cash. Exceptions may be made for projects that include supporting disadvantaged communities and at-risk populations, however the applicant must still show a 100% match to the total project budget.

In-kind match may include donated supplies, equipment or time. Donated volunteer or equipment time should be accounted for using designated rates and have supporting documentation such as sign-in sheets. If your organization does not have designated volunteer rates, a \$29.95 per hour volunteer in-kind rate will be used. COCO will assist funded organizations in creating a system to manage this documentation if you do not currently have that capability.

6. Reporting and Monitoring Requirements

Recipients will be required to provide project status updates with each reimbursement request throughout the 12-month life of the grant. Upon completion of the project, recipients must report on project outcomes that resulted from utilizing AIM funds or were enabled because of AIM capacity support, including the following that apply to your project:

- A. Number of homes/properties treated or protected
- B. Number of acres treated (under AIM *and* those treated by collaborative partners on adjacent public lands)
- C. Cost per acre to treat
- D. Number of partnerships created or enhanced
- E. Cubic yards of woody material generated and removed
- F. Number of jobs created/maintained
- G. Number of volunteers and hours donated
- H. Matching funds acquired as a direct result of receiving this grant
- I. Use of any forest products generated
- J. Map of project area
- K. GIS data related to project
- L. Before and after pictures
- M. How activities or outcomes increased from baseline conditions (i.e. 20% more homeowners or 5% more HOAs engaged; increase in the number of slash sites from 0 to 2 or increase in chipper program participants from 20 to 75; increase in slash chipped from 100 tons to 250 tons).