



Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG) Joint Powers Authority

STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority

From: Kristen Pfeiler, ESCOG Regional Wildfire Coordinator

Subject: 1) Authorize to Executive Director to Execute Documents and Agreements to Accept and Implement the \$4.6 M Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG)

Meeting date: October 22, 2025

Prepared on: October 14, 2025

Attachments: A) Eastern Sierra Communities Wildfire Defense Program Presentation
B) Eastern Sierra Communities Wildfire Defense Program Grant Application
C) Financial Statement Forms

Background:

The U.S. Forest Service awarded ESCOG \$4.6 million through the Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) to establish a dual-county community hazardous fuel removal and wildfire resilience program. This authorization allows ESCOG to complete all required administrative steps to accept the award and begin program implementation.

Program Highlights:

- Establishes staffing capacity in ESCOG.
- Funds 340 community cleanup events and 200 home fuel reduction projects in high-risk communities.
- Conducts 1,250 home ignition zone assessments to guide low-cost, high-impact mitigation.
- Removes and processes 9,500 tons of hazardous fuel through County Public Works chipping and composting operations.
- Provides every resident with a clear pathway to make their property safer, strengthen their community's ability to withstand future wildfires, and contribute to local crews and programs that turn hazardous fuels into valuable community resources.

The five-year program begins with a foundational first year focused on staffing, equipment, and system setup, followed by four years of full implementation, refinement, and transition to long-term county-led operations that sustain community wildfire mitigation across the region.

Year 1 Timeline and Key Milestones (Oct 2025 – Jan 2027)

Dec – Feb 2026 | Program Launch and Outreach

- Complete required award forms and route agreements.
- Present program to ESCOG Board, ESWA, Fire Safe Councils, Tribal Councils, and partner agencies.

Mar – April 2026 | Setup and Mobilization

- Execute sub-awards and contracts.
- Hire and onboard ESCOG and County personnel.
- Define partner roles during kickoff meeting (Feb 2026).
- Set up quarterly reporting system and metrics dashboard.
- Purchase fuel-reduction equipment and mitigation software.
- Schedule home assessments, cleanups, and Year 1 education events (WRW, Last Chance, Quarterly Ed Events).

Apr – Jun 2026 | Program Rollout

- Launch first home assessments and community cleanups.
- Begin education events and partner training.

Jul – Sep 2026 | Mid-Year Implementation and Evaluation

- Continue cleanup and education events.
- Conduct six-month partner debrief (Sept 2026).

Oct – Dec 2026 | Infrastructure and Close-Out of Year 1

- Build composting pads in both counties.
- Prepare annual reports and recommendations.

Jan 2027 | Annual Debrief and Transition to Year 2

- Present Year 1 outcomes and finalize adjustments for improved 2027 implementation.

The Community Wildfire Defense Grant is funded by the U.S. Forest Service. A grant agreement will be provided once the standard forms (Attachment C) are returned to the Grants and Agreements Office. Staff anticipates receiving the agreement in December 2025.

Fiscal Impact:

The U.S. Forest Service Community Wildfire Defense Grant provides \$4,689,827 in federal funding over five years, with a 100% cost-share waiver based on service to high-risk, low-income, and disaster-impacted communities. No local match is required. Funds will be used to support ESCOG program staff, purchase fuel reduction equipment, and administer sub-awards and contracts with Inyo and Mono Counties and partner organizations. Grant funds will flow through ESCOG, which will serve as the fiscal agent and program manager.

Recommended Action:

Staff requests the ESCOG Board of Directors authorize the Executive Director to:

- Sign and submit all necessary documents required by the U.S. Forest Service to formally accept the Community Wildfire Defense Grant award in the amount of \$4,689,827;
- Execute sub-award agreements with Inyo and Mono Counties for implementation of county-specific program components; and
- Enter into contracts with partner agencies, consultants, and vendors as needed to initiate the Eastern Sierra Communities Wildfire Defense Program in accordance with the approved grant scope and budget.