

FRIAA FireSmart Info call – January 15, 2025 (Summarized with AI)

1. **Meeting Introduction:** Sherry introduced the meeting, provided an overview of the agenda, and mentioned that the call is being recorded and will be summarized using AI.

FireSmart Program Overview: Sherry explained the focus of the call on the FireSmart program and the two requests for proposals (1. vegetation management and 2. non-vegetation projects). She also mentioned the importance of signing up on the FRIAA website for notifications about funding announcements.

- **Program Focus:** Sherry highlighted that the call would focus on the FireSmart program and the two requests for proposals: one for vegetation management and the other for non-vegetation projects. She emphasized the importance of these proposals be in the context of the FireSmart program (not broader emergency management).
 - **Website Notifications:** Sherry encouraged participants to sign up on the FRIAA website to receive notifications about funding announcements and other relevant updates. She mentioned that all necessary information for grant applications is available on the website.
2. **Grant Application Process:** Sherry detailed the grant application process, including the deadlines for submission (February 24th) and the Review Committee's role in evaluating applications. She emphasized the importance of addressing all required elements in the templates and provided guidance on preparing strong proposals.
 - **Submission Deadlines:** Sherry informed participants that the deadline for submitting grant applications is February 24th at 4:00 PM. She stressed the importance of meeting this deadline to ensure their applications are considered.
 - **Review Committee:** Sherry explained that the Review Committee, which includes representation from eight different organizations, evaluates each application on its own merit. She mentioned that the Committee ensures a full spectrum of considerations are made, including consideration from the FRIAA Board of Directors, Alberta Forestry and Parks, Alberta Municipalities, Rural Municipalities Association, FireSmart Alberta, Municipal Affairs, Alberta Emergency Management Agency and Indigenous Services Canada.
 - **Application Templates:** Sherry emphasized the importance of addressing all required elements in the application templates. She advised participants to use both the RFP and RFEOI documents and templates in parallel to ensure applicants include all necessary information in their proposals.
 - **Proposal Preparation:** Sherry provided guidance on preparing strong proposals, including the need to address eligible activities and expenses, and to ensure projects are FireSmart specific. She mentioned that the maximum funding

amount for a single project is \$200,000 and that projects should ideally be completed within one year.

3. **Funding and Project Management:** Sherry discussed the maximum funding amount for a single project (\$200,000) and the preference for completing projects within one year. She also mentioned the availability of funding support for proposal development and the importance of having a dedicated project manager.
 - **Funding Limits:** Sherry stated that the maximum funding amount for a single project is \$200,000. She encouraged participants to plan their projects accordingly and to aim for completion within one year, although extensions are possible if needed.
 - **Proposal Development Support:** Sherry mentioned that funding support is available for proposal development, typically about \$1,000 available to hire a FireSmart consultant to help prepare the proposal. She explained the process for submitting this expense once it is approved by the Review Committee, with the proposal or expression of interest submission.
 - **Project Management:** Sherry highlighted the importance of having a dedicated project manager to ensure the project stays on track and meets its objectives. She mentioned that project management fees should be reasonable, ideally within 10-15% of the total budget.

4. **Questions and Clarifications:** Participants asked questions about the grant writing process, funding for proposal development, and the strategy for submitting applications for multiple communities. Sherry provided detailed answers and guidance for each query.
 - **Grant Writing Process:** Asked if the \$1,000 funding for grant writing could be pre-approved. Sherry explained that it cannot be pre-approved, but it is likely to be approved if the proposal is for eligible activities and is reasonable. She emphasized the importance of hiring an appropriate consultant and ensuring the application is solid.
 - **Proposal Development Funding:** Asked if the expense for hiring a contractor to assist with writing the grant comes from a different pot of money than the grant itself. Sherry confirmed that it does not have to be part of the \$200,000 grant and is considered a separate expense.
 - **Multiple Communities Strategy:** Inquired about the strategy for submitting applications for multiple communities. Sherry advised that it depends on the scope of work and the total cost. If the total cost exceeds \$200,000, separate applications should be submitted. She also suggested prioritizing the work within the applicant's communities if there were multiple locations.

5. **Prioritizing Projects:** Sherry explained the factors considered by the Review Committee when prioritizing projects for funding, including the project's impact on wildfire mitigation and the importance of multistakeholder projects within the 10-kilometer community zone.
 - **Review Committee Considerations:** Sherry outlined the factors considered by the review committee, including the project's impact on wildfire mitigation, cost-efficiency, and technical-effectiveness. She mentioned that the Committee looks for projects that address eligible activities and expenses.
 - **Multistakeholder Projects:** Sherry emphasized the importance of multistakeholder projects that involve collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions and different levels of government. She mentioned that larger-scale projects that extend beyond the immediate community are prioritized.
6. **Vegetation Management Projects:** Sherry provided specific guidance for vegetation management projects, including the need for areas to be identified in a Wildfire Mitigation Strategy or Hazard and Risk Assessment and the importance of prioritizing high-risk areas (highly flammable fuels and critical values-at-risk).
 - **Project Identification:** Sherry advised that areas proposed for vegetation management should be identified in a Wildfire Mitigation Strategy or at least a Hazard and Risk Assessment. She emphasized the importance of prioritizing high-risk areas, such as those with black spruce or critical infrastructure like health centers and schools.
 - **Guidebook and Resources:** Sherry mentioned the availability of a guidebook for community protection, which provides an overview of evaluating risks and developing wildfire mitigation strategies. She also recommended checking the FireSmart Alberta website for additional resources.
7. **Letters of Support and Project Budgeting:** Sherry emphasized the importance of obtaining letters of support from relevant stakeholders and provided guidance on project budgeting, including the need for competitive and cost-effective rates and the exclusion of certain expenses.
 - **Letters of Support:** Sherry stressed the importance of obtaining letters of support from relevant stakeholders, such as the Wildfire Management Branch and FireSmart Alberta. She mentioned that these letters help strengthen the proposal and demonstrate stakeholder engagement.
 - **Budgeting Guidance:** Sherry provided guidance on project budgeting, emphasizing the need for competitive and cost-effective rates. She mentioned that FRIAA cannot fund existing full-time staff, capital asset purchases, or generalized admin fees. She encouraged participants to quantify in-kind contributions and include them in their proposals.

8. **Reporting and Project Completion:** Sherry outlined the reporting requirements and the process for project completion, including the need for regular updates and the possibility of project extensions if needed. She also mentioned the importance of notifying FRIAA of any staffing changes.
 - **Reporting Requirements:** Sherry explained the reporting requirements, including the need for regular updates on project progress. She mentioned that FRIAA structures 20% of the approved project grant for the final payment, to ensure the project is complete and all deliverables are met.
 - **Project Extensions:** Sherry mentioned that project extensions are possible if needed, such as for seasonal constraints on vegetation treatment. She advised participants to notify FRIAA as soon as they know an extension is required.
 - **Staffing Changes:** Sherry emphasized the importance of notifying FRIAA of any staffing changes to ensure their records are up to date and to facilitate communication throughout the project.
9. **FireSmart Alberta Resources:** Sherry recommended checking out the FireSmart Alberta website for resources, including the FireSmart 101 online course, which provides a comprehensive overview of the FireSmart program.
10. **Regional Positions for FireSmart:** Asked about the eligible activities for non-vegetation projects, specifically building capacity to support the RCF program. Sherry explained that a separate request for proposals would be coming out for regional positions, with limited funding available for up to five positions.
11. **Follow-Up and Next Steps:** Sherry encouraged participants to reach out to FRIAA with any questions and to ensure their contact information is up to date. She also mentioned the importance of engaging with Field Liaisons early in the process to develop strong proposals.

Follow-up tasks for the Grant Application Process:

- Submissions for projects are due by February 24th, 4:00 PM.
- Email FRIAA admin at admin@friaafriaa.ab.ca to confirm attendance at today's meeting.
- Contact FRIAA field liaisons for assistance in developing and prioritizing grant proposals.
- Ensure that all project proposals include specific eligible activities and expenses as outlined in the RFP or RFEOI documents.
- Submit a municipal, settlement or band council resolution as part of the grant application.
- Include letters of support from relevant authorities, such as the Wildfire Management Branch and FireSmart Alberta, in the grant application.
- Ensure that all vegetation management project areas are identified in the wildfire mitigation strategy or hazard and risk assessment.