



# CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT



June 17, 2025

## ITEM TITLE

Grant Award and Appropriation: Accept Grant Funds from the Governor's Office of Service and Community Engagement/California Volunteers

**Report Number:** 25-0165

**Location:** No specific geographic location

**Department:** Fire

**G.C. § 84308 Regulations Apply:** No

**Environmental Notice:** The activity is not a "Project" as defined under Section 15378 of the California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines. Therefore, pursuant to State Guidelines Section 15060(c)(3) no environmental review is required.

## Recommended Action

Adopt resolution accepting the Governor's Office of Service and Community Engagement/California Volunteers #CaliforniansForAll Youth Service Corps grant of \$1,992,458 and appropriating funds for that purpose (4/5 vote required).

## SUMMARY

The Fire Department applied for the Governor's Office of Service and Community Engagement/California Volunteers #CaliforniansForAll Youth Service Corps Grant for the hiring and training of youth crew members to remove hazardous wildfire fuels throughout the City. Accepting this grant award would provide \$1,992,458 over 18 months, resulting in reduced wildfire risk to the community and job opportunities and job readiness training for South Bay youths aged 16-30 years old.

## ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Director of Development Services has reviewed the proposed activity for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and has determined that the activity is not a "Project" as defined under Section 15378 of the State CEQA Guidelines because it will not result in a physical change in the environment. Therefore, pursuant to Section 15060(c)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the activity is not subject to CEQA.

## BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Not Applicable

## DISCUSSION

The City of Chula Vista has prioritized the mitigation of hazardous wildfire-prone fuels in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), fire hazard severity zones, evacuation routes, and mutual threat zones throughout the City. While accomplishing this critical work, the City, through the Fire Department, can also provide the youth from the South Bay of San Diego County a career path opportunity to work on the Chula Vista Fire Department's Hazardous Fuels Reduction Crew (Hand Crew). The CVFD Hand Crew has already provided the first step for several crew members to a career as a first responder (firefighter, emergency medical technician, or paramedic).

The City of Chula Vista owns and is accountable for over 3,200 acres of WUI, consisting of grass, brush, and chaparral within canyons and open spaces spread throughout the city and mutual threat zones in the South Bay of San Diego County. Until recently, there was not a consistent hazardous fuels reduction program, and many of these canyons and open spaces have gone decades without exposure to natural fire cycles or fuels treatment/reduction. Southern California has also experienced cycles of severe storms and extreme drought, contributing to dense, highly contiguous fuel loads. These accumulated fire loads are a significant and urgent wildfire threat to the city. In response to this threat, in 2023, the Chula Vista Fire Department (CVFD) initiated a Hand Crew Program to begin hazardous fuels reduction on all 3,200 WUI acres, open space areas located in the fire hazard severity threat zones, and city evacuation routes. Currently, the Crew is staffed with 13 members and has the capacity to clear approximately 100 acres of hazardous fuels per year. Funding from a local non-profit, coupled with a match from the City of Chula Vista, enabled CVFD to purchase the equipment needed to begin the program. Through this new grant opportunity from the California Volunteers, we aim to expand our Crew by hiring additional Crew members (10 Full-time and 20 Part-time), increasing our hazardous fuels reduction capacity to 180-200 acres a year.

One of the tenets of our Crew Program is to "provide a career pathway into the fire and emergency response services with the intent to recruit and hire. Crews like this have a proven track record for providing a gateway to career positions throughout the state." This grant will provide the opportunity to have consistent, meaningful, and productive work as Chula Vista Fire Department employees, while also providing them with the opportunity to receive training and certification as an emergency medical technician (EMT) and coursework required for Wildland Firefighter Type 1 and Wildland Firefighter Type 2 certifications. The additional hands-on practical experience in hazardous fuels reduction, disaster relief, fire prevention, public education, use and maintenance of heavy equipment, power/hand tools, and emergency medical care, further enhances the youth fellow's value as a career firefighter, EMT, and/or paramedic. Additionally, Crew members receive mentorship and guidance from full-time CVFD suppression members in pursuing additional education, certification, and career goals, preparing them for successful careers in the fire service.

The priority applicants targeted for this program will be from underserved populations, including at-risk youth, individuals facing economic hardship, the unemployed, never employed, justice-involved, and housing insecure, that are between the ages of 16-30. By investing in our youth and providing them with the skills and opportunities to succeed, we not only strengthen our workforce but also build a safer, more resilient City.

### **DECISION-MAKER CONFLICT**

Staff has reviewed the decision contemplated by this action and has determined that it is not site-specific and, consequently, the real property holdings of the City Council members do not create a disqualifying real property-related financial conflict of interest under the Political Reform Act (Cal. Gov't Code § 87100, et seq.). Staff is not independently aware and has not been informed by any City Council member of any other fact that may constitute a basis for a decision-maker conflict of interest in this matter.

### **CURRENT-YEAR FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no current year fiscal impact. The grant period begins next fiscal year.

### **ONGOING FISCAL IMPACT**

Approval of the resolution accepts \$1,992,458 from the California Volunteers and amends the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget by appropriating funds to the Fire Section of the Other Grants Fund and State Grants Fund. There is no cost share responsibility to the City and no fiscal impact to the General Fund.

This grant opportunity has a defined performance period from July 1, 2025, through December 31, 2026 (18 months). Grant program expenses will be limited to the grant award funds unless future funds are identified, secured, and allocated. Staff will return for additional City Council consideration to add temporary benefited job classifications and other necessary actions in July 2025.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

#### **1. Grant Award Agreement**

*Staff Contact: Harry Muns, Fire Chief; Marlon King, Emergency Services Manager; Piper Denlinger, Sr. Public Safety Analyst*