



Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) Grants- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What are travel guidelines and restrictions under a sub grant?

VDOF is obligated to follow federal travel rules for per diems, hotel costs, and mileage reimbursement. Please visit www.gsa.gov/perdiem to determine the appropriate rates.

2. What are the documents required to claim personnel expenses and or volunteer match time under a VDOF grant?

In order for personnel/volunteer time to be considered as a direct cost or match under a federal grant, time worked must be within the grant award dates and Form 3.26 Time and Activity Log for Staff and Volunteers must be completed and submitted with the grant reimbursement request. Form 3.26 can be found here: <http://dof.virginia.gov/forms/index.htm>. Please complete this form accurately, and provide specific dates worked, names, and time worked on the project; please **DO NOT** enter time as totals, either for the overall organization or by volunteer/staff. We must be able to see specific dates and times for our records.

3. What rate of pay should I use for actual staff and how to document? For volunteers?

For staff, use their actual rate of pay, including fringe benefits, if applicable. Please provide copies of paystubs or reports to document the actual cost. For volunteers, use the appropriate rate for Virginia found at the Independent Sector's website here: <https://independentsector.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Value-of-Volunteer-Time-by-State-2001-2018-1.pdf>.

4. What are expenses eligible to qualify as a match under our grant?

Expenses outlined in your original budget, both project costs, in-kind labor (volunteers) and costs. Expenses already supplemented or claimed under another federal grant (including professional or volunteer time) are **NOT** eligible. Please provide adequate documentation for all claimed match expenses. If your original budget needs to be changed, please contact your VDOF Program Manager to discuss.

5. What form should we submit to request a reimbursement under our grant:

Please use the Form, 42 Forestry Grant Program: Request for Reimbursement, found here: <http://dof.virginia.gov/forms/index.htm>. Please make sure to include your original budget information in column 1.

6. We have made changes since we originally submitted our scope of work/budget. Can we just make substitutions under our grant?

No, you must submit a modification request in writing to your grant to your VDOF Program Manager at least 90 days prior to the end of the project.

7. Our organization needs to amend our original budget, length of performance, scope of work, etc. under our grant agreement. How do we accomplish this?

Please submit a brief narrative explaining why the change is needed, along with budget or work changes, if applicable to your VDOF Program Manager. These documents will be reviewed by VDOF's Grant Accountant and Program Manager and you will be notified via email regarding the final decision.

8. My reimbursement payment has been delayed because of an incomplete W-9. What can I do to resolve this?

VDOF is only allowed to accept the state specific W-9 found here <http://dof.virginia.gov/forms/index.htm> under Finance. A fully completed form will help to expedite your grant reimbursement.

9. Our organization is hosting a training and/or volunteer work day would like to provide lunch and/or beverages and snacks. Is this allowable?

Probably not. The federal government has very strict guidelines as to when federal funds can be used for food purchases and is for very specific situations involving overnight travel and/or emergency response situations. Please contact your VDOF Program Manager to have **ALL** food costs **pre-approved**.

10. It is more affordable for our organization to use various homestays like Airbnb for our lodging purposes. Is that allowable?

No, the State of Virginia's lodging policy does not permit lodging alternatives for official state business travel, and because it is a part of VDOF's travel guidelines, it also applies to travel under federal grants. Although alternative lodging may be a less expensive than

hotel/motel lodging in some cases, the safety of travelers is a concern. With reputable hotels/motels, there is an expectation of safety within the structure, whereas, there is no guarantee of minimum safety requirements being met with Airbnb and similar alternatives.

11. Our organization is hosting a training and the most convenient and affordable event space also makes alcohol available to patrons (i.e., breweries, bars, etc). We will not be serving alcohol at our event – is this allowable?

Probably not. Please contact your VDOF Program Manager to discuss prior to making any plans/reservations.

12. I have calculated and prepared our invoice; who should receive it?

Please submit your invoice to your VDOF Program Manager as outlined in your award.

13. I am working with an entity who is the recipient of a VDOF sub-grant and have expended personal funds on grant-related expenses on behalf of the entity. Can I submit my receipts for personal expenses for VDOF reimbursement?

No, under federal rules, VDOF is not allowed to reimburse an individual. You may submit your receipts/paid invoices to the entity who received the sub-grant, and as long as the expenses were approved in advance and are allowable under the grant, they should be able to reimburse you. VDOF can only reimburse the sub-grant recipient for the total expenses incurred under the approved project.

14. Our organization purchases and distributes gift cards as a token of thanks to our volunteers and/or speakers/facilitators. Is this an allowable expense for reimbursement?

No. Federal guidelines are very strict about purchases of certain items, and gift cards could be used to purchase unallowable items.

15. Someone in our organization donates the use of their home/office to our organization. Can we determine an appropriate cost for this and use it as either an actual grant expense or grant match?

No. Federal guidelines do not allow the use of a home/office as a direct expense or as part of a match.

16. Can our organization purchase equipment and or supplies and expect reimbursement under our federal grant?

The Federal definition of equipment is: tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost which equals or exceeds \$5,000. Equipment may not be purchased under a federal award without pre-approval.

Materials and supplies are defined as all tangible personal property other than that described as Equipment (i.e. under \$5,000 acquisition cost) used for the performance of a Federal award. Approved materials and supplies may be charged as direct costs.

17. What are the guidelines for sub-recipients to follow when remitting payments to THEIR contractors for work performed under a VDOF grant/award?

VDOF Sub-recipients, (who are also considered contractors) MUST adhere to the Commonwealth of Virginia’s contractual payment policy:

To Contractors who use Subcontractors:

- a. **Within seven (7) days of the contractor’s receipt of payment from the Commonwealth, a contractor awarded a contract under this solicitation is hereby obligated:**
 - (1) To pay the subcontractor(s) for the proportionate share of the payment received for work performed by the subcontractor(s) under the contract; or
 - (2) To notify the agency (VDOF Program Manager) and the subcontractor(s), in writing, of the contractor’s intention to withhold payment and the reason.
- b. The contractor is obligated to pay the subcontractor(s) interest at the rate of one percent per month (unless otherwise provided under the terms of the contract) on all amounts owed by the contractor that remain unpaid seven (7) days following receipt of payment from the Commonwealth, except for amounts withheld as stated in (2) above. The date of mailing of any payment by U. S. Mail is deemed to be payment to the addressee. These provisions apply to each sub-tier contractor performing under the primary contract. A contractor’s obligation to pay an interest charge to a subcontractor may not be construed to be an obligation of the Commonwealth.

18. Our organization does not have a federal identification number (FEIN). How can we obtain a FEIN?

You can apply for a FEIN online, by mail or by fax – for more information, please consult the IRS site here:

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/employer-identification-number>

19. Our organization is aware that we are receiving a grant from VDOF-may we begin project work immediately?

You should wait until you receive a fully executed copy of your grant award from VDOF as VDOF will NOT reimburse for costs **OR** allow match expenses which are incurred PRIOR TO the date on your award letter.