Fire and Emergency Services

Grant Writing Guide

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER FIRE COUNCIL
Before You Apply….

Qualifying

☑ Most grants go to organizations that are registered 501(c)3 charitable organizations with the IRS.

☑ Although governmental entities such as fire departments are not usually 501(c)3 designees, they are still nonprofit in structure and can receive grant funding from the federal government, foundations, and corporations.

☑ A grant’s program guidance or grant parameters will define if your fire department is eligible to apply.

DUNS Number

☑ Effective October 1, 2003 all federal grant applicants must obtain a Dun & Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number. The DUNS number helps the federal government identify organizations that receive federal funding. DUNS numbers can be found on the Dun & Bradstreet website http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform.

☑ There is no charge to obtain a DUNS number, and it is the applicant’s responsibility to obtain one. Applicants apply for a DUNS number prior to applying for a federal grant. It may take several weeks or more to obtain the number online.

Where to Look for a Grant

☑ Local foundations: www.foundationcenter.org (database access requires payment).

☑ Local corporations.


☑ State government: state websites, state agencies, elected officials, state associations, state emergency management.


Planning

☑ Rule number one in grant writing is that you do not ask for a grant without first completing a comprehensive planning process that involves your organization and its stakeholders.

☑ Completing a risk assessment for your fire department is critical. A formal risk assessment consists of employing software or recognized analysis to assess risk trends. Examples of informal assessments include a manual study of fire loss, burn injuries, or life loss over a period of time, and the causative factors for each occurrence.

☑ Be sure to utilize strategic planning.

Questions to Ask Before Applying for a Grant

☑ What programs are strong and already have regular funding to keep them strong and productive?

☑ What new programs are in need of funding?

☑ What opportunities are available within the grant world?

☑ What current grants will cycle out and will be in need of funding to continue?

☑ What does the risk assessment indicate?

Writing a Successful Narrative….

Narrative Tips

☑ Make sure you clearly state the department’s need.

☑ Utilize local information.

☑ Provide information to the reviewer that they will not know.

☑ Provide details about how your personnel will be trained. Grants such as the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response program (SAFER) require compliance with NFPA 1001.

☑ Have multiple people read and proofread your document.

Answer these questions when writing a narrative:

☑ Who are you?

☑ Where are you?

☑ What is your risk/problem?

☑ What is the solution/fix?

☑ What standards will be met?

☑ How much will the project cost?

☑ How reasonable is your request?

Financial Need

☑ You must demonstrate a clear need.

☑ Describe your income compared to your expense to show your current funding shortfalls.
Explain other attempts to fund needs.
Explain financial and community trends or changes as they relate to funding.

Cost/Benefit
- Explain what benefits you will realize in return for the funds.
- Map out the frequency of use vs. cost.
- Demonstrate how the funds will increase the efficiency of operations.
- Explain the best economical fix/cure for the problem.
- Detail the consequences of not receiving funding.
- Explain potential dangers to the health and safety of firefighters.

Effect on Operations
- How will this grant improve firefighter safety?
- Detail the frequency of use/utilization.
- Describe how you will measure results.
- Make sure your method is clearly measurable.

Reach a Broad Audience
- In some cases, programs that reach more people will often receive greater consideration.
- Funders like to see their money go further.
- Partner with local, state, or national organizations to strengthen your application. Partnering with neighboring fire departments may also be beneficial.

How to Contact Potential Funders
Before a Proposal is Submitted...
- If applying to a foundation or corporation, an introductory call may be appropriate. Discuss your grant and identify your need. This is also a good time to clarify any questions you may have regarding the guidelines.
- A letter of inquiry may be necessary before the grant process begins. A letter of inquiry summarizes the project and helps the grant maker to determine if your project fits the necessary criteria before a proposal is submitted.

While the Proposal is Pending....
- A site visit may be requested. Be sure department leaders participate and are prepared.
- Send a thank you letter and provide any requested information after the site visit has occurred.

After a Proposal is Awarded...
- Send a thank you letter.
- Clarify any remaining questions.
- Communicate with the grant maker on a regular basis.

Or Rejected...
- Send a thank you letter.
- Call to discuss next steps or how to strengthen your application.
- If at first you don’t succeed try, try again.

Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program
The primary goal of the Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) is to meet the firefighting and emergency response needs of fire departments and nonaffiliated emergency medical services organizations.

Eligibility
- Fire Departments
An agency or organization that has a formally recognized arrangement with a state, territory, local, or tribal authority i.e. city, town, county, parish, fire district, township, or other governing body to provide fire suppression on a first due basis to a fixed geographical area. Fire departments may be comprised of members who are all volunteer, all career, or a combination of volunteers and career.

- Nonaffiliated EMS Organizations
A public or private nonprofit emergency medical service organization that provides direct EMS to a specific geographic
Program Areas

Vehicle Acquisition

- 25 percent of available funding is allocated to vehicle acquisition.
- The apparatus priorities detailed in the grant guidance are critical for a successful grant award.
- Very competitive - everybody wants a truck.
- Urban/suburban applicants may request multiple vehicles on the same application.
- Grantees must comply with Chapter #6 of the NFPA 1500 “Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program.”
- Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG’s) should require that all vehicle occupants wear seatbelts & that drivers obey all traffic laws, signals and signs.

Operations and Safety

- Training
  - Fire Departments must indicate the percentage of active firefighters trained to NFPA 1001.
  - Fire departments that have less than 100% of active firefighters trained to NFPA 1001 will be asked to explain their plans to meet the standard.

- Equipment
  - PPE
    - Agencies will be asked to provide significant information in their applications regarding existing equipment inventory.
    - The age of existing PPE will be considered in all phases of the review process.

- Modification of Facilities
  - Facilities built after 2003 are not eligible for funding.
  - Facilities with sleeping quarters that are occupied 24/7 will receive the highest priority.
  - Exhaust extraction systems are a high priority.
  - Units approved must remove exhaust to the outside of the facility.

- Wellness/Fitness
  - Expense for consultants such as nutritionists and fitness trainers are not eligible.
  - Expense for incentives to participate in wellness & fitness programs are not eligible.
  - Activities in this area must be in the priority of:
    - Initial physicals.
    - Annual physicals.
    - Immunizations (shots).

- Regional Projects
  - There must be a host department.
  - These projects must be able to facilitate interoperability and efficiency for the project request.
  - Obtain a memorandum of understanding among all agencies involved.

AFG Cash Matching Requirement

Population
- Under 20,000  5%
- 20,000 – 50,000  10%
- Over 50,000  20%

Maximum Funding

- Less than 500,000  $1,000,000
- 500,000 – 1,000,000  $1,750,000
- More than 1,000,000  $2,750,000

Number of Applications

- All departments may submit up to three separate applications.
  1. Vehicles.
  3. Regional Projects.
- Be sure you complete only one application at a time.
Staffing Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grants

The purpose of Staffing Adequate and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grants are to improve the ability of fire departments to “assemble a sufficient number of firefighters” at a structure fire in compliance with the applicable sections of NFPA 1710 and 1720 and to assist fire departments in reaching “four person staffing” on the first due suppression unit for structure fires.

Eligible Activities

Hiring of firefighters (5 year match)

- Federal Share year one: up to 90%
- Federal Share year two: 80%
- Federal Share year three: 50%
- Federal Share year four: 30%
- Grantee (FD) match year five: 100%

Recruitment & Retention of volunteer firefighters (up to a four year match).

- There is NO MATCH requirement for the recruitment and retention grants.
- Ten percent of funding is designed for hiring of firefighters in volunteer or mostly volunteer departments.
- Ten percent of the funding is designed for recruitment & retention activities.
- There is an $111,523 limit for each firefighter position spread over the life of the grant.

New in Fiscal Year 2009 and 2010

- As a part of President Obama’s Stimulus Package, an automatic waiver of the local match for new SAFER grants awarded in fiscal years 2009 and 2010.
- The stimulus bill automatically waives the 10-20-50-70% local match for new SAFER grants awarded during the FY 2009 and FY 2010 application periods. The FY 2009 application period is expected to take place during the summer of this year.

Key Factors

Grantees must maintain the following:

1. The number of authorized and funded firefighter positions at the time of application.
2. The awarded SAFER-funded firefighter positions throughout the entire five year period of performance.

Fire Prevention and Safety Grants

Part of the AFG program, Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) Grants support projects that enhance the safety of the public and firefighters from fire and related hazards. Any organization that has experience in fire prevention activities or that conducts research in fire safety activities is eligible to apply for this grant opportunity.

Examples of Fundable Programs/Activities

- Public Safety programs/education.
- Code enforcement/awareness.
- Arson awareness/prevention.
- Juvenile fire setter programs/awareness.
- Sprinkler awareness.
- Smoke alarm awareness/distribution.
- Burn prevention.
- Firefighter safety (Research & Development).
Keep in Mind....

Grant writing Ethics

- Utilize integrity.
- Be honest.
- Truthfulness is paramount.
- If it goes in your narrative be able to “back it up”.
- You should expect to be audited.
- You will be required to meet all grant requirements.
- Utilize other grants for samples but do not copy.
- You can get reported for being dishonest and damage your department’s ability to receive future grants.

Procurement Issues

Competition

- Grantees are expected to promote competition. This means getting pricing from multiple bidders.
- Purchases should be made as a result of competition from the bidders who best meet the requirements and provide the best price & quality.
- The timeliness of delivery should be considered when making these decisions.

Documentation

- Grantees are required to maintain the paperwork related to their purchases.
- Grantees who fail to document their purchases may find that their expenditures will be disallowed.
- Paperwork needs to be kept for a minimum of three years.
- Keep a record of all bids.
- Bids must be after the award date.

Specifications

- Specifications shall clearly describe the requirements of the product to be purchased or contracted.
- Specifications may not be written in a way that unduly limits, restricts, or eliminates competition unnecessarily.

Conflict of Interest

- Members of your department who work for vendors/manufacturers cannot:
  - Work on the application.
  - Develop specifications.
  - Develop statements of work.
  - Participate in the procurement of any requested item in the grant.
  - Volunteers, employees, members, officers, family members, and grant writers may not benefit from the procurement of any item or contracted service purchased with grant funding.
  - Grantees who purchase items from vendors who employ any of their volunteers, members, and family must document how they avoided a conflict of interest during the procurement process.

Additional Resources:

For access to funding opportunities, grant writing tips, assistance, and more, visit [http://www.nvfc.org/grants](http://www.nvfc.org/grants).

For assistance with federal grants such as AFG, SAFER, and FP&$S, contact them directly at:

Website: [http://www.firegrantsupport.com/](http://www.firegrantsupport.com/)
Phone: 1-866-274-0960 (Help Desk)
E-mail: firegrants@dhs.gov