

National Junior Firefighter Program

Sponsorship toolkit



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Junior firefighter programs are a valuable tool for fire departments. They serve as a recruitment mechanism, allowing youth the opportunity to gain technical skills that they can apply toward a future career or as a volunteer in the fire and emergency services. Youth volunteers can also help with important fire safety and prevention outreach, department fundraising, and chores around the station. And no matter where they go after graduation, they become citizens who are better prepared for fire and emergencies and are equipped with life skills such as leadership, teamwork, and responsibility. But like all the tools in the fire department's toolbox, junior firefighter programs do cost money.

Starting, maintaining, and growing a program in your department can seem like a challenge – especially securing the funding, grants, and sponsors to make it work. But with creativity and the support of local organizations, you can make it a reality. The National Volunteer Fire Council's (NVFC) National Junior Firefighter Program created this guide to help you secure the funding you need to start your program or to maintain and grow your existing program.

This toolkit walks you through securing sponsors and grants at the local level. Donations, grants, and sponsorships are given by businesses, foundations, nonprofits, and government entities to support specific projects and causes. This funding can range from a few hundred dollars to thousands of dollars – or more.

Many departments also secure funds through local fundraising events that are focused on individual donations. Find fundraising event ideas on the National Junior Firefighter Program web site at www.nvfc.org/juniors/resources/resources-for-departments. Additional ideas are available in the *Core Competencies for the Junior Service* guide, available for download at www.nvfc.org/juniors/training.

If you have any questions, the NVFC's National Junior Firefighter Program is here to help. Visit www.nvfc.org/juniors or contact the NVFC at 888-ASK-NVFC (275-6832) or juniors@nvfc.org for more information.



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Section 1: Getting Started

Developing a successful junior firefighter program can be easier than it seems. This section will walk you through some of the many resources available to help you as you launch and build your program, and then take you through the steps of identifying and reaching out to potential sponsors and community supporters.

NVFC National Junior Firefighter Program: Resources for Your Department

There are thousands of local junior firefighter programs nationwide. The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) created one national program where departments and youth alike can find the resources, tools, and information they need to help develop, grow, enhance, promote, and participate in these local programs. Since the program's launch in July 2007, over 4,500 junior firefighters and departments have registered with the National Junior Firefighter Program.

The National Junior Firefighter Program supports fire departments by fostering relationships and engaging youth in learning about, and ultimately becoming, members of the emergency services. The program offers

resources and tools to departments to help them develop, manage, and recruit for a local program. Resources include the following:

- **Core Competencies for the Junior Fire Service** – This manual addresses the need for safe, functional, and effective training exercises for junior firefighters. It outlines key skills junior firefighters will need as they look forward to their futures in the fire service, and includes step-by-step training drills.
- **Junior Firefighter Handbook** – This guide outlines the steps for starting, maintaining, and expanding a junior firefighter program.
- **Online Hour-Tracking Tool** – Junior firefighters can log their volunteer and training hours in this user-friendly online tool; departments can view all of their junior firefighters' hours in one location.
- **Searchable Department Database** – Youth interested in finding a local junior firefighter program, or a local department wanting to connect with other programs for training or events, can find departments registered with the National Junior Firefighter Program in this targeted search engine.
- **In-person Training** – The National Junior Firefighter Academy is a one-day, hands-on training event for junior firefighters. Advisors benefit from the Training the Next Generation course, which focuses on leading a local program.





- **Online Training** – The Training the Next Generation course is also available as a webinar. In addition, the NVFC periodically adds new videos and webinars for junior firefighters and departments.
- **Recruitment Tools** – Find a five-minute video, PowerPoint presentation, and other tools for recruiting youth to your program.
- **Sample Documents** – View sample Standard Operating Procedures/Guidelines, press release templates, and more.

Find more information and access these resources on the National Junior Firefighter Program web site at www.nvfc.org/juniors, or contact the NVFC office at 888-ASK-NVFC (275-6832) or juniors@nvfc.org.

The NVFC also offers a Junior Membership level for people under the age of 18. Membership is just \$15 a year and includes incentive rewards for achieving volunteer hour benchmarks, discounts with NVFC corporate partners, eligibility for training and awards, and more. View all the benefits and join today at www.nvfc.org/membership.

Steps to Securing Sponsorship

Once you have decided to start or expand a junior firefighter program, you may find you need additional resources and sponsors to support your program. Perhaps you want to take all of your junior firefighters to a regional training event, or buy gear specifically for each junior firefighter. Many departments don't have a line item in the budget for anything beyond the basics for their junior firefighter program (if that!), but don't let this deter you from implementing your program. You will find that reaching out into the community can provide the sponsorship and support you need to make your program beneficial for your department and exciting and fulfilling for your junior firefighters.

The steps below provide a basic outline for securing sponsors. The subsequent sections of this toolkit provide further details, samples, and tips to help you as you implement your sponsorship outreach plan.

Get Started.

- 1 **Designate a leader.** Choose someone to be in charge of the sponsorship outreach effort who can keep everyone motivated and will be diligent about following up and checking on progress. While a junior firefighter program advisor or a member of the department leadership will most likely be the person

in charge, this is a great opportunity to involve experienced junior firefighters in another aspect of fire department business.

- 2 **Hold a brainstorming session.** Involve other department members and junior firefighter parents. Discuss ideas for whom to approach for sponsorships. Find out who from the group has connections with local businesses or grant-making nonprofits. Remember that donations don't have to be monetary – maybe a local charter bus company is willing to provide transportation to a training event. Be creative.
- 3 **Do your research.** If you do not have a pre-existing contact at a particular business, find out who is in charge of community relations or corporate giving and address initial correspondence to that person. This information can often be found on the company's About Us or Contact page. Also, see if you can find any information on the company's past community philanthropy or sponsorship, as this may help you in your current outreach. A simple internet search can provide background information. You can also utilize social media networking sites such as LinkedIn.
- 4 **Create a written plan.** Decide who will be contacting each person/company on your list. Determine your objective beforehand – what are you asking from each prospective donor?
- 5 **Get ready to ask for donations.** Make sure each person who will be talking with prospective donors or sponsors is prepared to talk about your department, the junior firefighter program, your goals, and what you are asking from each potential donor. Create hand-outs to give to prospective donors. Remind prospective donors of the importance of your department to the community. Utilize information from www.nvfc.org/juniors to demonstrate how junior firefighter programs strengthen departments and help youth become leaders in their community. Educate them on how a junior firefighter program is both a fire department program and a youth community service initiative.
- 6 **Inform the public.** Send a press release, using the Seeking Support Press Release Template (page 8), to local television stations, newspapers, radio stations, and community group newsletters explaining what a local junior firefighter program will achieve – or what it is already doing in the community – and that you are seeking community support. Follow up with each media outlet to see if you can provide more information. Media outreach is important because it means that by the time you call your



prospect, they may have already heard about the department's junior firefighter program and be more receptive to sponsorship.

Reach Out.

- 1 Start contacting your prospective donors.** Call or send a letter or email, whichever is more appropriate for that contact. Make sure that each company/person is only being contacted by one department member or volunteer. If it is appropriate, visit your prospect in person.
- 2 Don't be shy!** Asking for a donation can be intimidating. But remember, these donations are not for you personally – a donation will help your department by strengthening your junior program and provide youth with important tools for their future, which helps the whole community and saves lives.
- 3 Keep the door open for future requests.** If someone does not want to donate right now, ask if you can contact them in the future about other types of donations. Remember to thank them for their consideration.

Follow Up.

- 1 Keep a record of your efforts and the results.** You can refer back to this the next time you need to make donation requests.
- 2 Plan follow-up visits or phone calls.** If your prospect would like more information, schedule a meeting where you can talk face-to-face about the donation possibilities. If you haven't gotten a response from sending a letter or email, follow-up with a phone call. If you haven't gotten a response from a local business, try stopping by during business hours to speak with a manager. Businesses get many letters requesting donations, so make sure they have a chance to hear your request.
- 3 Send follow-up letters after a meeting or call.** Thank your prospect for their time and consideration, and remind them of any ideas or potential donations that you discussed during your conversation.
- 4 Send a thank-you letter** to those that make a donation. If you receive a donation, make sure and send a thank-you letter with a monetary or in-kind donation receipt, if applicable. Learn more in the IRS guidelines section on page 22. If the gift is large or you worked with your contact on several occasions, have the Chief make a thank-you call. You could also consider recognizing the business at your next junior firefighter banquet.

- 5 Follow up with the press.** Send follow-up press releases, using the New Sponsor Press Release Template (page 25), as companies sign on to support your program. This gives recognition to your donor and brings more attention to your efforts. Call the contacts you spoke with initially to let them know about your success. Make sure to thank all of your donors and let everyone know that your junior firefighter program is an ongoing project, new youth join each year, and your program needs ongoing support.
- 6 Report your success to the NVFC.** Contact the NVFC at juniors@nvfc.org or 1-888-ASK-NVFC (275-6832) with your story. Your success can inspire other departments and help even more departments launch or develop a junior firefighter program.

Sponsorship Tip Sheet

These tips will help you decide which companies to approach based on your needs, how to get press, and creative ideas to take advantage of existing programs.

- **Contact your local newspapers.** Ask them to write an editorial about the department's efforts to involve youth in community preparedness and safety, which strengthens the department and teaches youth teamwork, leadership, and other life skills. Make sure that they mention that the department is accepting donations to support the program. Ask them to write a follow-up later so that you can recognize your donors and highlight your program's successes.
- **Take advantage of existing programs.** Seek out companies that sponsor other youth-related events and programs in the community, such as school fundraisers or Little League teams. For example, a local sporting goods or custom t-shirt company might be willing to donate shirts and other gear for your program, or a transportation company that already works with the high school sports teams might donate or give a discount on charter buses to attend a regional training event.
- **Work together with other departments in your area.** They may have contacts at regional businesses, universities, or other organizations who would like to expand their reach, and you can motivate each other through friendly competitions and training events.
- **Contact a local college.** They may have programs with students who could intern with your department to support your program. Think outside the box – while fire science students would be natural fit, education or social work majors might also be

interested in the work of creating youth leaders. You could also utilize students for one-time projects, such as marketing students to help you develop an outreach plan, graphic design majors to create logos and advertising materials, and students with an interest in video production to help with a recruitment video.

- **Don't overlook used items.** Use press releases and other media outreach to ask the community for donations of used items, such as computers/laptops for the program advisor, digital camera, video camera, car or truck for program use, games/movies for fun event nights, or general office supplies. You can also contact local electronics and office supply retailers asking for donations of floor models or returned items that still work and will meet your department's needs.
- **Create a sponsorship program based on reaching goals.** Ask a local company to sponsor the department through monetary or in-kind donations each time your junior firefighter program reaches a certain goal. For example, if juniors achieve a goal of installing 500 smoke alarms or volunteer a total of over 1,000 hours for the year, the company will donate \$1,000 to the department.
- **Say thank you!** Remember to acknowledge your supporters publicly whenever you can, and always follow up on any service or donation with a thank-you letter from the Chief or a card signed by all of the juniors. If you are registered as a 501(c)(3) organization, send a donation receipt for the service or item so that your donor can receive tax benefits (see page 22).

Use Cost Savings Calculators to Gain Support for Your Department

One way to gain support for your department's junior firefighter program is to drive home how important your department is to the community. Your members save lives and property on a regular basis, and supporting the future of the fire service is one way your community members can help give back to those who serve while preparing the next generation of firefighters.

Volunteer and combination departments can utilize the NVFC Foundation's Cost Savings Calculators to further demonstrate the value of their department to the community. Nationally, it is estimated that volunteer first responders save taxpayers \$139.8 billion annually (The Total Cost of Fire in the United States, NFPA, March 2014). Use the Fire Department and EMS Cost Savings Calculators to figure out how much the volunteers in your department save your community. The calculators can be accessed online at www.nvfc.org/hot-topics/cost-savings-calculators.

In addition to the Calculators, the NVFC provides a customizable PowerPoint presentation you can use when meeting with city officials, civic groups, or potential sponsors to educate them on the value of your department to the community. These cost-savings figures can help make the case for the need for local, state, and federal investment in the volunteer emergency services.

The NVFC's National Junior Firefighter Program also offers a presentation and other resources to help departments demonstrate the impact of junior firefighter programs. Find these tools at www.nvfc.org/juniors, and view key points about the benefits of junior firefighter programs on page 15 of this guide.





Press Release Template: Seeking Support for a New Program

Customize this press release template to announce your program to the community.

Media Advisory

CONTACT: <NAME>

<PHONE NUMBER, EMAIL ADDRESS>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

<FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> SEEKS COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR NEW JUNIOR FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM

<CITY, DATE> –The <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME AND ACRONYM> is launching a junior firefighter program to prepare the next generation of first responders to protect our community. Junior firefighter programs give young people the chance to learn about local fire, rescue, and emergency medical services in a safe, controlled, educational, and fun way while providing departments with an excellent recruitment mechanism.

Reaching out to people when they are young has long-range effects, and encouraging youth to take part in the emergency services is extremely beneficial to local communities and departments.

<QUOTE FROM CHIEF OR PROGRAM ADVISOR ABOUT BENEFITS OF LAUNCHING PROGRAM>

The <FIRE DEPARTMENT ACRONYM> is seeking the support of the community to help develop and maintain the junior firefighter program. Financial contributions will be used to fund program needs such as fire prevention props and supplies, travel to training events, and equipment. The new program can also benefit from in-kind donations such as training supplies, t-shirts, and audio visual equipment.

The <FIRE DEPARTMENT ACRONYM> is registered with the National Volunteer Fire Council's National Junior Firefighter Program, which offers resources and tools to help departments develop and manage a local program. Junior firefighters can also use the national web site to find information on scholarships, universities and colleges with fire science programs, and training camps. Learn more at www.nvfc.org/juniors.

The <FIRE DEPARTMENT ACRONYM>'s <NUMBER> members provide <NUMBER> hours of service and respond to <NUMBER> calls each year. Junior firefighters will help support the department's non-operational functions now, such as providing fire prevention education in local schools, as well as train to protect their community in the future.

The community can give back to those who serve them by contributing to the department's junior firefighter program. To support this program, contact <NAME AND TITLE> at <EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER>.

###



Sample Press Release: **Seeking Support for a New Program**

This is an example of what a customized press release might look like.

Media Advisory

Contact: Program Advisor Jane Smith

123-555-4567, jsmith@fire.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TOWNSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT SEEKS COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR NEW JUNIOR FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM

TOWNSVILLE, APRIL 25, 2014 – The Townsville Volunteer Fire Department (TVFD) is launching a junior firefighter program to prepare the next generation of first responders to protect our community. Junior firefighter programs give young people the chance to learn about local fire, rescue, and emergency medical services in a safe, controlled, educational, and fun way while providing departments with an excellent recruitment mechanism.

Reaching out to people when they are young has long-range effects, and encouraging youth to take part in the emergency services is extremely beneficial to local communities and departments.

“TVFD is excited to launch a junior firefighter program for the many area youth who have expressed interest in helping at the fire station,” said Program Advisor Jane Smith, a TVFD volunteer firefighter. “Through this program, we will be able to expand our fire prevention and safety outreach program, as well as provide safe and educational hands-on training for local teens.”

The TVFD is seeking the support of the community to help develop and maintain the junior firefighter program. Financial contributions will be used to fund program needs such as fire prevention props and supplies, travel to training events, and equipment. The new program can also benefit from in-kind donations such as training supplies, t-shirts, and audio visual equipment.

The TVFD is registered with the National Volunteer Fire Council’s National Junior Firefighter Program, which offers resources and tools to help departments develop and manage a local program. Junior firefighters can also use the national web site to find information on scholarships, universities and colleges with fire science programs, and training camps. Learn more at www.nvfc.org/juniors.

The TVFD’s 42 members provide 12,102 hours of service and respond to 659 calls each year. Junior firefighters will help support the department’s non-operational functions now, such as providing fire prevention education in local schools, as well as train to protect their community in the future.

The community can give back to those who serve them by contributing to the department’s junior firefighter program. To support this program, contact Program Advisor Jane Smith at 123-555-4567 or jsmith@fire.org.



Section 2: **Reaching Out**

The information provided in Steps to Securing Sponsorship (page 5) outlined the process for making “the ask” to potential donors and sponsors. This section provides a template “ask” letter, sample letters, meeting talking points, and tips for making the pitch in order to help make “the ask” easier. As in the previous section, there are both templates and samples in this section. You can fill in the indicated customizable parts of the templates with your department’s information and have a ready-to-use document, or use the template as a starting point to develop your own materials. The samples provide an example of what a finished product might look like.





Letter Template: Asking for Support

Use this template to ask potential sponsors for their support. Customize your letter to fit your department's needs.

<FIRE DEPARTMENT LOGO>

<DATE>

<CONTACT NAME>

<TITLE>

<COMPANY NAME>

<ADDRESS>

<SALUTATION>:

The <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME AND ACRONYM> has launched a junior firefighter program to prepare the next generation of first responders to protect our community. Junior firefighter programs give young people the chance to learn about local fire, rescue, and emergency medical services while serving as a recruitment tool for the fire department. I am writing to ask for your support for the <FIRE DEPARTMENT ACRONYM> junior firefighter program.

We request that <COMPANY> donate <DESCRIPTION>. This will allow us to <DESCRIPTION OF BENEFIT TO DEPARTMENT>. Your company will be supporting those who serve the community while preparing the next generation of first responders. You will also be helping our community's youth to participate in a valuable program that will instill important skills such as leadership, teamwork, responsibility, and the spirit of volunteerism. In return, you will be provided with <LIST PROMOTIONAL AND TAX BENEFITS>.

The <FIRE DEPARTMENT ACRONYM>'s <NUMBER> members provide <NUMBER> hours of service and respond to <NUMBER> calls each year. Junior firefighters will help support the department's non-operational functions now, such as providing fire prevention education in local schools, as well as train to protect their community in the future.

Please support the <FIRE DEPARTMENT ACRONYM> junior firefighter program by donating <DESCRIPTION>. I will follow up with you in the coming weeks to discuss this opportunity further. In the meantime, if you have any questions or are ready to pledge your support, please contact me at <PHONE> or <EMAIL>. I look forward to working with you to promote youth volunteerism in the fire service.

<CLOSING>,

<NAME>

<TITLE>



Sample Letter: Asking for In-Kind Donation – Charter Bus Rental Company

This is an example of what an in-kind donation ask letter to a charter bus rental company might look like.

May 2, 2014

Ms. Megan Johnson
Director of Marketing
Around Town Transportation
231 First Street
Townsville, USA 12345

Dear Ms. Johnson:

The Townsville Volunteer Fire Department (TVFD) has launched a junior firefighter program to prepare the next generation of first responders to protect our community. Junior firefighter programs give young people the chance to learn about local fire, rescue, and emergency medical services while serving as a recruitment tool for the fire department. I am writing to ask for your support for the TVFD junior firefighter program.

We request that Around Town Transportation donate one round-trip charter bus rental for 20 youth to attend the State Convention Junior Firefighter Training weekend on October 11-12 in Springfield. This event will allow our youth to share ideas and train with other junior firefighters from throughout the state. Our department has limited funding for junior firefighter training props and facilities, and the State Convention training provides the opportunity for youth to put on gear, navigate a smoke house, and practice safe training in state-of-the-art facilities. Our juniors will return from the training with a better understanding of what it takes to be a firefighter. Your company will be supporting those who serve the community while preparing the next generation of first responders. In return, you will be provided with a donation letter as well as recognition through a press release and in our annual banquet program.

The TVFD's 42 members provide 12,102 hours of service and respond to 659 calls each year. Junior firefighters help support the department's non-operational functions now, such as providing fire prevention education in local schools, as well as train to protect their community in the future.

Please support the TVFD junior firefighter program by donating a round-trip charter bus rental. I will follow up with you in the coming weeks to discuss this opportunity further. In the meantime, if you have any questions or are ready to pledge your support, please contact me at 123-555-4567 or jsmith@fire.org. I look forward to working with you to promote youth volunteerism in the fire service.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith
Program Advisor



Sample Letter: Asking for In-Kind Donation – T-Shirt Production Company

This is an example of what an in-kind donation letter to a t-shirt production company might look like.

May 23, 2014

Mr. Mark Miller
Community Relations Coordinator
Custom Tees
3656 Maple Lane
Townsville, USA 12345

Dear Mr. Miller:

The Townsville Volunteer Fire Department (TVFD) is launching a junior firefighter program to prepare the next generation of first responders to protect our community. Junior firefighter programs give young people the chance to learn about local fire, rescue, and emergency medical services while serving as a recruitment tool for the fire department. I am writing to ask for your support for the TVFD junior firefighter program.

We request that Custom Tees donate 20 logoed t-shirts so we can outfit each of our junior firefighters. In addition, we would like to request 100 fire department shirts that the junior firefighters will sell to raise funds for the program, including purchasing training gear and tools. Your company will be supporting those who serve the community while preparing the next generation of first responders. In return, you will be provided with a donation letter as well as recognition through a press release and in our annual banquet program. Your company logo will also appear on each t-shirt.

The TVFD's 42 members provide 12,102 hours of service and respond to 659 calls each year. Junior firefighters will help support the department's non-operational functions now, such as providing fire prevention education in local schools, as well as train to protect their community in the future.

Please support the TVFD junior firefighter program by donating 20 t-shirts for the junior firefighters and 100 t-shirts for use as a fundraiser. I will follow up with you in the coming weeks to discuss this opportunity further. In the meantime, if you have any questions or are ready to pledge your support, please contact me at 123-555-4567 or jsmith@fire.org. I look forward to working with you to promote youth volunteerism in the fire service.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith
Program Advisor



Sample Letter: Asking for Monetary Donation

This is an example of what a monetary donation ask letter might look like.

May 19, 2014

Mr. Fred Marshall
Community Relations Director
Townsville Factory
2121 Industry Place
Townsville, USA 12345

Dear Mr. Marshall:

The Townsville Volunteer Fire Department (TVFD) has launched a junior firefighter program to prepare the next generation of first responders to protect our community. Junior firefighter programs give young people the chance to learn about local fire, rescue, and emergency medical services while serving as a recruitment tool for the fire department. I am writing to ask for your support for the TVFD junior firefighter program.

We request that Townsville Factory donate \$1,000 to our junior firefighter program. Your support will help cover registration and travel expenses for the junior firefighters' trip to the State Convention Junior Firefighter Training weekend this October in Springfield. This event will allow our youth to share ideas and train with other junior firefighters from throughout the state. Our department has limited funding for junior firefighter training props and facilities, and the State Convention training provides the opportunity for youth to put on gear, navigate a smoke house, and practice safe training in state-of-the-art facilities. Our juniors will return from the training with a better understanding of what it takes to be a firefighter. In return, you will be provided with a donation letter as well as recognition through a press release and in our annual banquet program.

By making this donation, your company will be supporting those who serve the community while preparing the next generation of first responders. You will also be helping our community's youth to participate in a valuable program that instills important skills such as leadership, teamwork, responsibility, and the spirit of volunteerism.

The TVFD's 42 members provide 12,102 hours of service and respond to 659 calls each year. Junior firefighters help support the department's non-operational functions now, such as providing fire prevention education in local schools, as well as train to protect their community in the future.

Please support TVFD by donating \$1,000 to help the juniors attend the State Convention training weekend. I will follow up with you in the coming weeks to discuss this opportunity further. In the meantime, if you have any questions or are ready to pledge your support, please contact me at 123-555-4567 or jsmith@fire.org. I look forward to working with you to promote youth volunteerism in the fire service.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith
Program Advisor

Meeting Talking Points

When talking to a potential donor or sponsor, you should emphasize the importance of providing leadership, teamwork, and hands-on training to youth interested in the fire service; how your department will benefit from additional non-operational support such as fundraising and fire prevention outreach as well as future recruitment efforts; how the company or potential sponsor can help; the impact your department has on the community; and why it is important for the company to support this initiative. Talking points may include the following:

- Sixty-nine percent of the brave firefighters protecting our nation are volunteers. Unfortunately, the number of volunteers is declining while calls for help are increasing.
- According to the National Fire Protection Association, the fire and emergency services community experienced a 13 percent decline in volunteers since 1984. During the same time period, calls to departments have nearly tripled nationwide. In addition, the age of volunteer firefighters is increasing. The recruitment and retention of volunteers is an immediate, urgent need for the fire service.
- Junior firefighter programs promote youth participation in the fire service, providing opportunities for youth to serve in their communities and meeting a pressing long-term need for retention and recruitment of trained volunteers. Youth can help the department with non-operational tasks such as fire prevention education in schools, fundraising, special events, and more.
- Youth benefit from junior firefighter programs by increasing their abilities to be prepared in an emergency, learning job skills that can result in career or volunteer opportunities as a firefighter, and learning life skills such as leadership, teamwork, responsibility, and the value of volunteerism.
- The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) launched the National Junior Firefighter Program in 2007 to provide resources to junior firefighters and junior firefighter programs to build the future of the fire service. The program provides marketing and recruiting resources, sample documents and templates, scholarship and youth firefighter camp listings, an online hour-logging tool so that junior firefighters can track their hours of service, and more. <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> uses these free resources to enhance the local program.
- The <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME>'s junior firefighter program will include <DESCRIBE PLANS AND GOALS FOR PROGRAM>.
- **For volunteer and combination departments:** Donated time from volunteer firefighters save localities across the country an estimated \$139.8 billion per year. According to the NVFC's Fire and EMS Cost Savings Calculators, our local volunteers save our community over <AMOUNT> each year. You can see that it is important that we continue to train the next generation of firefighters to keep the future of our department strong.
- <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> answers <NUMBER> calls each year, covering a population of <NUMBER>. These calls are answered by <NUMBER> firefighters and emergency services personnel.
- <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> has been acknowledged for their service by <LIST AWARDS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS>.
- By supporting the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME>, your company will benefit from increased community exposure, including <Describe any press or other public acknowledgement AND TAX BENEFITS (IF APPLICABLE) the company will receive>.





Tips for Making the Pitch

Once you have landed a meeting with a local company and you have your opportunity to make your pitch, how do you actually ask for the support that your department needs? These tips will help you make the pitch to local companies to secure sponsorships.

- 1 Personalize your ask.** Know who you are meeting with and their role within the company. Are they related to someone in your department? Have they supported the department before? Find ways to connect with them.
- 2 Know the company.** Treat a meeting with a potential donor just like a job interview – do your research. Know what the company does and what organizations and initiatives they support. Make sure that what you're asking for is something that the company would be able to do.
- 3 Reach their bottom line.** Would supporting the department provide an opportunity for free publicity through press releases and other media? Would they get complimentary fire safety training for their employees in exchange for their support? Would their donation be tax deductible? While you are researching the company, think about how supporting the local emergency services could help their business. For example, if you have an annual event such as a cook-out, you could display company signage and let them have a booth to display their merchandise.
- 4 Have a plan.** Make sure that you have a clear plan of what you are asking for and what the company will receive in return for their support. Provide printed hand-outs if possible that list the benefits of supporting your department. Include a description of what the department will be able to accomplish with the donated items, money, or support.
- 5 Know your program.** Make sure your junior firefighter program is clearly defined and you are able to talk about it knowledgeably. Be able to explain how the program will benefit the department, local youth, and the community. Demonstrate that the department is committed to the program and will follow through to make it a success.
- 6 Show what you are doing in the community.** Provide information about your work and the value of your department and of your junior firefighter program if it is already established. Use specific examples of the inspiring things your department or junior firefighter program has done. If you are in a volunteer or combination department, use the NVFC Fire Department and EMS Cost Savings Calculators (www.nvfc.org/hot-topics/cost-savings-calculators) to show the monetary value of the department to your community and the need to foster the next generation of firefighters.
- 7 Say thank you!** Remember to acknowledge your supporters whenever you can, and always follow up on any service or donation with a thank-you letter. If you are registered as a 501(c)(3) organization, send a donation receipt so that your donor can receive tax benefits. Refer to IRS Guidelines for Charitable Donations and Tax Deductions (page 22).





Section 3: **Following Up**

Following up is one of the most critical components of securing sponsorship. You want to make sure you retain a good relationship with your donors and sponsors so that they continue to support your organization and initiatives.

Once you have made the pitch, remember to follow up with the potential sponsor. Send a thank you letter after a meeting to express appreciation for their time and consideration.

Once you receive a donation from a company, make sure you send a thank you letter and include a donation receipt if applicable, following all donation guidelines set forth by the IRS. Be sure to fulfill any obligation you committed to in exchange for the donation, such as acknowledgement of the company in department newsletters and materials, free fire safety training for the company's employees, or whatever was agreed upon. In any follow-up press releases or at sponsored events, be sure to acknowledge the company's support.

This section contains customizable templates and samples of thank you letters, IRS tax deduction and donation guidelines, and customizable templates of donation receipts that you can use when following up with your supporters.

THANK YOU





Letter Template: Follow-up to Meeting

Use this template to follow up after a meeting with a potential sponsor.

<DATE>

<CONTACT>

<TITLE>

<COMPANY>

<ADDRESS>

<SALUTATION>:

It was a pleasure meeting with you on <DATE>. I enjoyed learning more about <COMPANY>'s work in our community and discussing with you the many ways in which we can work together to support the next generation of firefighters.

As you know, the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME>'s <NUMBER> firefighters and EMTs respond to over <NUMBER> calls per year. Training youth to support the department through non-operational activities while providing them with safe, leadership-building fire service training will strengthen our community now and in the future. Your assistance and support will help accomplish our goals of <LIST GOALS>.

As we discussed, there are many benefits to your company in supporting our program, including <LIST BENEFITS OF SUPPORT INCLUDING TAX DEDUCTION (IF APPLICABLE) AND PUBLICITY>.

Again, I enjoyed speaking with you about <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME>'s junior firefighter program and hope we can count on your support. Please contact me with any additional questions you might have. I look forward to working with you on this project and will be in touch to discuss moving forward.

<CLOSING>,

<NAME>

<TITLE>



Sample Letter: Follow-up to Meeting

This is an example of what a follow-up letter might look like.

June 1, 2014

Mr. Mark Miller
Community Relations Coordinator
Custom Tees
3656 Maple Lane
Townsville, USA

Dear Mr. Miller:

It was a pleasure meeting with you on May 29. I enjoyed learning more about Custom Tees' work in our community and discussing with you the many ways in which we can work together to support the next generation of firefighters.

As you know, the Townsville Volunteer Fire Department's 42 firefighters and EMTs respond to over 650 calls per year. Training youth to support the department through non-operational activities while providing them with safe, leadership-building fire service training will strengthen our community now and in the future. Your assistance and support will help accomplish our goals of outfitting our junior firefighters and raising funds to pay for training and gear for our junior firefighters.

As we discussed, there are many benefits to your company in supporting our program, including a donation letter to be used for tax deduction purposes, as well as recognition in local media, a logo in our annual banquet program, and your logo on each of the t-shirts.

Again, I enjoyed speaking with you about TVFD's junior firefighter program and hope we can count on your support. Please contact me with any additional questions you might have. I look forward to working with you on this project and will be in touch to discuss moving forward.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith
Program Advisor



Letter Template: Thank You for Donation

Use this template to write a thank you letter to a sponsor or donor.

<DATE>

<CONTACT>

<TITLE>

<COMPANY>

<ADDRESS>

<SALUTATION>:

Thank you for <COMPANY>'s generous contribution to the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME>'s junior firefighter program. It was a pleasure to work with you and everyone on the <COMPANY> team to <STATE ACTIVITY>.

<DESCRIBE PARTNERSHIP, INCLUDING RESULTS, OUTCOMES, AND OTHER DETAILS TO DEMONSTRATE SUCCESS>

Your generosity has contributed greatly to our junior firefighter program and strengthened our department. Thank you again for your contribution, and I look forward to continuing this partnership in the future.

<CLOSING>,

<NAME>

<TITLE>



Sample Letter: Thank You for Donation

This is an example of what a thank you letter might look like.

July 30, 2014

Mr. Mark Miller
Community Relations Coordinator
Custom Tees
3656 Maple Lane
Townsville, USA

Dear Mr. Miller:

Thank you for Custom Tees' generous contribution to the Townsville Volunteer Fire Department's junior firefighter program. It was a pleasure to work with you and everyone on the Custom Tees team to design the t-shirts for our junior firefighter program and our fundraising campaign.

The 100 donated t-shirts sold out in only one week, raising \$1,500 for our junior firefighter program. This exceeded our expectations and will allow us to purchase used gear for our junior firefighters so that they can participate in important training and educational activities. Plus, the donation of t-shirts for the juniors to wear has made them feel part of the department. They wear them with pride all around town!

Your generosity has contributed greatly to our junior firefighter program and strengthened our department. Thank you again for your contribution, and I look forward to continuing this partnership in the future.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith
Chief



IRS Guidelines for Charitable Donations and Tax Deductions

The IRS has specific rules and regulations for which donated items are eligible for tax deduction and how a 501(c)(3) should keep records of contributions. Following are the basic guidelines. Please visit www.irs.gov for more information.

Charitable Contributions – Substantiation and Disclosure

Organizations that are tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code must meet certain requirements for documenting charitable contributions. The federal tax law imposes two general disclosure rules:

- 1 A donor must obtain a written acknowledgment from a charity for any single contribution of \$250 or more before the donor can claim a charitable contribution on his/her federal income tax return;
- 2 A charitable organization must provide a written disclosure to a donor who makes a payment in excess of \$75 partly as a contribution and partly for goods and services provided by the organization.

Any goods or services provided to the donor must be deducted from the amount of the donation.

See Publication 1771, Charitable Contributions – Substantiation and Disclosure Requirements, for more information. www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p1771.pdf

Recordkeeping Requirements

A donor cannot claim a tax deduction for any contribution of cash, a check, or other monetary gift made on or after January 1, 2007, unless the donor maintains a record of the contribution in the form of either a bank record (such as a cancelled check) or a written communication from the charity (such as a receipt or a letter) showing the name of the charity, the date of the contribution, and the amount of the contribution.





Receipt Template: In-Kind Donation

Use this template to provide donors of goods and services with a record for their taxes.

<DATE>

<RECIPIENT NAME>

<TITLE>

<ORGANIZATION>

<ADDRESS>

Dear <NAME>,

Thank you for your in-kind donation of <DESCRIPTION> to the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME>.

Please keep this letter as a receipt for your gift. The value of donated goods is to be determined by the donor. This letter confirms that no goods or services were provided in exchange for this charitable contribution.

Thank you again for partnering with us as we work to build our junior firefighter program and train the next generation of firefighters.

Sincerely,

<NAME>

<TITLE>

If department is a 501(c)3 organization, include the following in your letter:

The <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> is classified by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as tax-exempt as defined in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and, as such, contributions to the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> are tax-deductible.



Receipt Template: Monetary Donation

Use this template to provide monetary donors with a record for their taxes.

<DATE>

<RECIPIENT NAME>

<TITLE>

<ORGANIZATION>

<ADDRESS>

Dear <NAME>,

Thank you for your donation of \$<AMOUNT> to the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME>. We appreciate your support of our department and our junior firefighter program. Thanks to supporters such as you we are able to <INSERT DESCRIPTION>.

Please keep this letter as a receipt for your donation. This letter confirms that no goods or services were provided in exchange for this charitable contribution.

Thank you again for partnering with us as we work to build our junior firefighter program and train the next generation of firefighters.

Sincerely,

<NAME>

<TITLE>

If department is a 501©3 organization, include the following in your letter:

The <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> is classified by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as tax-exempt as defined in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and, as such, contributions to the <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> are tax-deductible.



Press Release Template: New Sponsor

Use this press release template to announce a new sponsor.

Media Advisory

CONTACT: <NAME>

<PHONE NUMBER, EMAIL ADDRESS>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

<COMPANY NAME> SUPPORTS <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME> JUNIOR FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM

< CITY NAME, DATE> – <FIRE DEPARTMENT NAME AND ACRONYM> has created a junior firefighter program to provide local youth with a safe and fun way to learn about the fire and emergency services, while supporting the fire department. <COMPANY NAME> is supporting the <FIRE DEPARTMENT ACRONYM> junior firefighter program by <INSERT SHORT SUMMARY OF WHAT IS FUNDED>.

<QUOTE FROM CHIEF OR PROGRAM ADVISOR ABOUT THE VALUE OF THE JUNIOR FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM AND THE IMPACT OF COMPANY’S SUPPORT (ie – what the support will enable the department to do)>

Junior firefighter programs give young people the chance to learn about local fire, rescue, and emergency medical services in a safe, controlled, educational, and fun way while providing departments with an excellent recruitment mechanism. Reaching out to people when they are young has long-range effects, and encouraging youth to take part in the emergency services is extremely beneficial to local communities and departments. Community support, like that shown by <COMPANY NAME>, is critical to the success of the program.

<QUOTE FROM COMPANY ABOUT IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORTING LOCAL EMERGENCY SERVICES>

<COMPANY INFORMATION – WHAT THEY DO, CONTACT PHONE NUMBER OR WEB SITE>

<FIRE DEPARTMENT ACROYMN> is still seeking additional support to grow and maintain its junior firefighter program. Give back to those who serve by contributing to the department’s efforts. To learn more about how you can help, contact <NAME AND TITLE> at <EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER>.

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Sample Press Release: New Sponsor

This is an example of what a customized press release might look like.

Media Advisory

Contact: Program Advisor Jane Smith

555-123-4567, jsmith@fire.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CUSTOM TEES SUPPORTS TOWNSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT JUNIOR FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM

TOWNSVILLE, JUNE 5, 2014 – The Townsville Volunteer Fire Department (TVFD) has created a junior firefighter program to provide local youth with a safe and fun way to learn about the fire and emergency services, while supporting the fire department. Custom Tees is supporting the TVFD junior firefighter program by donating logoed t-shirts for each junior firefighter. In addition, they are donating fire department shirts that the junior firefighters will sell to raise funds for their program.

“The newly-launched TVFD junior firefighter program is a great way for our local teens to find out more about firefighting, gain skills such as teamwork and leadership, and assist our department with important non-operational functions such as fire prevention education and outreach,” said Jane Smith, TVFD Junior Firefighter Program Advisor. “We appreciate the support of Custom Tees to this valuable program. The t-shirts provide a great benefit for junior firefighters and will help us raise funds to grow the program even more.”

Junior firefighter programs give young people the chance to learn about local fire, rescue, and emergency medical services in a safe, controlled, educational, and fun way while providing departments with an excellent recruitment mechanism. Reaching out to people when they are young has long-range effects, and encouraging youth to take part in the emergency services is extremely beneficial to local communities and departments. Community support, like that shown by Custom Tees, is critical to the success of the program.

“Custom Tees is excited to give back to this crucial part of our community: the fire department,” said Mike Jones, Custom Tees CEO. “We are proud to have the dedicated youth in the junior firefighter program wearing our customized t-shirts.”

Custom Tees was founded in 2007 to provide unique, customizable t-shirts and other apparel for sports teams, companies, community organizations, and more. Visit them at their store downtown at 3656 Maple Lane or find them on the web at www.customtees.web.

TVFD is still seeking additional support to grow and maintain its junior firefighter program. Give back to those who serve by contributing to the department’s efforts and support the next generation of our community’s first responders. To learn more about how you can help, contact Jane Smith, Program Advisor, at 555-123-4567 or jsmith@fire.org.

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Appendix: Government Grants

In addition to local support through private companies and organizations, many fire departments seek grant funding from the state and federal government. Each grant has specific guidelines and procedures for applying. Find more information through the links below.

NVFC Grant Writing Resources

www.nvfc.org/hot-topics/grant-writing-resources

The NVFC offers a variety of guides, webinars, and other resources to help you apply for a federal grant.

SAFER Grant Program

www.fema.gov/staffing-adequate-fire-emergency-response-grants

The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant program provides grants to fire departments for hiring personnel and to fire departments and regional and state fire associations to implement volunteer recruitment and retention programs, including junior firefighter programs.

Grants.gov

www.grants.gov

Grants.gov is a government-wide system used by federal agencies for posting grant announcements and online grant submissions. It is managed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The site contains information on over 1,000 grant programs from 26 federal grant-making agencies.

Federal Grants Wire

www.federalgrantswire.com

Federal Grants Wire provides information on over 1,800 federal grant and loan opportunities, organized by sponsoring agency, applicant type, and subject area. There is also a searchable grant directory and index. Additional resources include information about the definition and classifications of federal grants, how to write grant proposals, tips on applying for federal grants, application eligibility requirements, and more.

FireGrantsHelp

www.firegrantshelp.com

FireGrantsHelp's mission is to provide firefighters and departments with a comprehensive resource for grant information and assistance. The web site features the most extensive fire grant database ever created, with a library of information for federal grants as well as state, local, and corporate grant opportunities. Free grant assistance tools include research guidance, grant-writing tips, grant news, and more. **Note: NVFC members receive a discount on grant-writing services from FireGrantsHelp.**

