



# Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grants Program

**Quick Guide**

**January 2012**

**Fiscal Year 2011**



U.S. Department of Homeland Security

The purpose of this SAFER Quick Guide is to provide you, the applicant, with a simplified version of the FY2011 Guidance and Application Kit. The goal of this Quick Guide is to allow the applicant to quickly identify the “who”, “what”, “where”, “when” and “why” as it relates to the FY2011 SAFER Grant Program. This Quick Guide does not replace the FY2011 Guidance and Application Kit and we strongly encourage you to thoroughly review that document for additional information on the FY2011 SAFER Grant Program.

### **Key Dates and Time:**

Application Start Date: 01/30/2012

Application Submission Date: 02/24/2012 at 5:00:00 PM EDT

## **E-Grant Application:**

**Applications are accessible via <http://www.fema.gov/firegrants>.** The automated application is designed with help screens and drop-down menus to assist the applicant throughout the application process. Applicants can save their work and retrieve it for updates and revisions through the end of the application period.

**Note: Once an application has been completed and submitted, no changes can be made.**

The automated system does not allow an applicant to submit an incomplete application. The system alerts the applicant when required information has not been entered. By submitting an application online, the applicant will automatically receive confirmation via e-mail the application was successfully submitted.

The online system will allow one authorized representative of an eligible organization to log on and create a user name and password. The selection of the authorized representative is at the discretion of each applicant.

Applicants also should record their user name and password for future access to their application.

**Paper applications** are available. However, they are discouraged because of the inherent delays associated with processing. Additionally, paper applications do not have the built-in assistance of the electronic application or the assurance the application has been accurately completed. Applicants who wish to use a paper application may request one be sent to them via US Postal Service by calling the Help Desk at 1-866-274-0960.

***Paper applications will not be sent to prospective applicants via overnight delivery, fax, or e-mail.***

Paper applications must be mailed to:

**Cabazon Group**  
**ATTN: AFG Grant Program**  
**11821 Parklawn Drive, Suite 230**  
**Rockville, MD 20852**

Applications mailed to any other address may miss the appointed closing date and therefore will be disqualified and ineligible for funding.

All applications must be completed and submitted electronically, or postmarked on or ***before the close of business, by 5:00 p.m. (ET) on Friday, February 24, 2012.***

Only electronic applications submitted via the online, automated grant application system will receive a confirmation of receipt. Applicants should print a copy of the confirmation for their records upon receiving verification that their application has been successfully submitted. No confirmation will be issued for paper applications. Incomplete applications or applications submitted via any other electronic means, including e-mail or fax, automatically would be deemed ineligible.

Applicants are allowed to hire, or otherwise employ the services of, a grant writer to assist in the application process. However, the applicant is responsible for ensuring the information contained in the submitted application is a true and accurate reflection of their organization and represents the scope of effort being proposed and the time and cost required to achieve it. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to review all work produced by grant writers, or other third parties on their behalf, ***prior*** to submission of their application. Applicants who falsify their application, or misrepresent their organization or proposal in any manner, will have their application deemed ineligible by the Program Office and referred to the Office of Inspector General for further action, as appropriate.

## **Eligibility:**

**Eligible Applicants:** The following entities are eligible to apply directly to FEMA under this solicitation:

Volunteer Fire Departments may apply for funding in the following categories:

- Hiring of Firefighters Category (hiring career firefighters)
- Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Category
- Both categories; if the applicant wishes to apply for both categories, two separate applications must be completed, one for each category

Combination Fire Departments may apply for funding in the following categories:

- Hiring of Firefighters Category
- Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Category
- Both categories; if the applicant wishes to apply for both categories, two separate applications must be completed, one for each category

**Note:** Each of the above eligible applicants is limited to one application for recruitment and retention, and/or one application for hiring per application period.

**Example:** An applicant may not submit two applications for the same activity (e.g., Hiring of Firefighters Category) during a single application period. Should this occur, both applications would be disqualified.

Career Fire Departments may apply for funding in the following category:

- Hiring of Firefighters Category

Municipalities and fire districts may submit applications on behalf of fire departments lacking the legal status to do so, such as those under the support of the municipality or district. Each eligible applicant is limited to one application for hiring per application period.

**Example:** An applicant may not submit two applications for the same activity (e.g., Hiring of Firefighters Category) during a single application period. Should this occur, both applications would be disqualified.

Statewide or local volunteer firefighter interest organizations representing the interests of volunteer firefighters and individual fire departments (volunteer or combination) may apply for funding for regional projects under *Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Category*.

In completing the Department Characteristics section of the application, the regional applicant must include data approximating the characteristics of the entire region affected by the grant.

## Program Objectives:

SAFER grants are comprised of two primary categories: the Hiring of Firefighters Activity and the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity.

The highest priority in the Hiring of Firefighters activity is for departments seeking to rehire firefighters who have been laid off.

## Hierarchy of Priorities

**First priority:** Rehiring laid-off firefighters

**Second priorities:** Retention of firefighters who face imminent layoff and/or filling positions vacated through attrition but not filled due to economic circumstances

**Third priority:** Hiring new firefighters

The exceptions to these priorities are the statutory requirements that no less than 15 percent be awarded to new hire applicants as discussed in the Hiring of New Firefighters Activity, and the statutory requirement to award no less than 10 percent of funds to volunteer and mostly volunteer departments.

Under the Recruitment and Retention Activity, the highest priority is to assist departments experiencing a high rate of turnover and have staffing levels significantly below the ideal staffing level required to comply with NFPA standards 1710 or 1720.

## Restriction on Use of Award Funds:

### Hiring of Firefighters Activity:

#### Eligible Expenses

The only eligible costs under the Hiring of Firefighters for new or rehired firefighters activity are:

- Salary
- Associated benefits (actual payroll expenses)

SAFER funding will pay 100 percent of the salary and benefit costs for each funded position (see Appendix 1 for SAFER Grant Definitions)

- Firefighters that are employees at time of and/or hired prior to the award date, except if applying under the retention activity, are not eligible under the Hiring of Firefighters category.
- Overtime costs are not eligible. However, costs for overtime fire departments routinely pay as a part of the base salary or the firefighter's regularly scheduled and contracted shift hours are eligible in order to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act.
- Federal employees are prohibited from serving in any capacity (paid or unpaid) on any proposal submitted for this grant opportunity. Federal employees may not receive funds under this award.
- Only full-time positions will be funded. A full-time position is one position that is funded for at least 2,080 hours per year, i.e., 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year. However, recognizing many departments have shifts exceeding a 40-hour workweek, FEMA also will consider funding the job-sharing of a full-time position if

the grantee has sufficient justification. A job-share position is a full-time position occupied by more than one person.

**Example:** A department may hire two part-time staff persons at 28 hours each to fulfill the scheduled work hours of one 56-hour shift position.

### Ineligible Expenses

- Pre-application costs, such as grant writer fees, administrative costs, and indirect costs associated with hiring of firefighters
- Costs for training and equipping firefighters (however, the salaries and benefits of firefighters hired under the SAFER grants while they are engaged in training are eligible.)
- Costs for uniforms and physicals
- Funds to support additional hired positions or funds received from federal, state, or local sources cannot be used to supplant normal operating budgets unless a waiver has been granted

Volunteer and mostly volunteer fire departments may hire individuals to fill officer-level positions such as chief, fire inspector, training officer, safety officer, etc.

However, since the purpose of SAFER grants is to enhance incident scene safety, all applicants must certify the primary assignment of all SAFER-funded firefighters will be an operational assignment (e.g., fire suppression) regardless of collateral duties.

### Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity:

#### Eligible Expenses

Applicants who propose to initiate a recruitment and retention plan as a part of their application receive equal consideration. Proposals for this category may include providing incentives for volunteer firefighter members to continue service in a fire department.

Examples of initiatives that may receive funding include, but are not limited to:

- Insurance packages such as accidental death and dismemberment (AD&D), disability, health, dental, life
- Reimbursement to the member while attending required basic training, e.g., compensation for lost wages, mileage, lodging, per diem
- Marketing costs to recruit new volunteer members
- Station internet access
- Computers in common areas

- LED/electronic signs (note: 75% of usage must be dedicated to Recruitment and Retention activities – additional restrictions apply; see 'E, Other Allowable Costs')
- Station duty uniforms for new recruits (pants, shirts, hats)
- Non-uniform clothing (t-shirts, jackets, pullovers, etc.) when as part of an award program
- Station modifications (e.g., converting space into bunkroom - restrictions apply; see 'E, Other Allowable Costs')
- Salary and benefits for a recruitment and retention coordinator
- Physicals (consistent with NFPA 1582) for new recruits only
- Explorer, cadet, and mentoring programs
- Staffing needs assessment
- Administrative costs up to 3% of the awarded amount
- Tuition assistance for higher education (including college tuition) and professional certifications (**Note:** Coursework or certifications in this category should be above and beyond what the department typically funds for required minimum-staffing firefighter certification. Books and lab fees are eligible, but computers are not)
- Awards Program for participation in operational activities (e.g., length of service plaques, gift cards, non-uniform clothing, etc. for responding to incidents, attending operational training. However, payments may not be retroactive for service prior to award.)
- Establish a new Length of Service Award Programs (LOSAP) (funding of existing programs or retroactive payments are not eligible)
- Mileage reimbursement for operational activities (e.g., responding to incidents, attending training)
- Turnout gear after the new recruit undergoes a physical
- With proper justification, applications for funding in the Recruitment and Retention Activity could include activities requiring up to 4 years to complete
- For each activity requested, the applicant must establish the link between the activities for which funding is being requested and the identified recruitment and/or retention problems or issues to be addressed. FEMA will not fund activities without the applicant having made a sufficient correlation between the activity and its positive effect on the recruitment and/or retention of volunteer firefighters
- All funded activities under recruitment and retention must be governed by formally adopted standard operating procedures (SOPs). Minimally, these SOPs should specify who qualifies for each of the incentives, specific requirements for earning the incentives, and the disposition of the awarded incentives if an individual fails to fulfill the stipulations
- The limited funding available for SAFER activities precludes the award of funding for operational activities, such as the purchase of firefighting equipment and vehicles. Personal protective clothing may be funded for newly recruited

firefighters, but personal protective equipment for other types of members or existing members is not eligible

## Ineligible Expenses

- Costs incurred prior to award
- Payments or recognition for service prior to award (i.e., no retroactive payments)
- Cash payments for non-operational activities
- Payments for travel to and/ or participation in leisure activities such as theatre tickets, entertainment tickets, and tips (professional ball games, etc.)
- Costs associated with award banquets, such as food, refreshments, entertainment, or rental facilities. Reimbursement for actual awards, e.g., plaques, and trophies, is eligible
- Costs for training regularly covered under the department's operating budget, such as tuition or instructor fees for department-mandated, basic-level training
- Services at a members personal residences (e.g., internet access, plowing of driveways, etc.)
- Furniture, TV's, fixtures, appliances (refrigerators, etc.), entertainment equipment
- "Giveaways" such as pencils, pens, t-shirts, cups, mugs, balloons, etc. for recruitment events
- Fees for courses and training that are also available free of charge on the internet or at a state/local training facilities (NIMS 100, 700, 800, etc.)

## Application Review and Selection Information

### ***Application Review Information:***

All complete and eligible applications are evaluated based on the substance of the application relative to the established SAFER Grant funding priorities. The answers to activity-specific questions, as well as information under Department Characteristics, provide the basis to determine the application's standing relative to stated priorities. This initial evaluation assesses how closely each application matches the program's established priorities (see information on the funding priorities in *Part I. Funding Opportunity Description*).

Applications most consistent with the SAFER Grant funding priorities score higher in the automated evaluation than those applications not aligned with the priorities. The initial scores are combined later with the scores of the applications after they receive peer review evaluations; each score represents 50 percent of the total application score with respect to the final award determinations.

A panel of at least three peer review panelists performs the second phase of the applications' evaluations. These panelists evaluate the application using the narrative statement, along with the answers to the general questions and the activity-specific questions, to determine the worthiness of the request for an award. Each application is judged on its own merits against established criteria and is not compared to other applications.

Panelists will evaluate and score the following criteria:

## 1. Hiring of Firefighters Category Narrative Elements

The narrative statement for applications requesting funding in this category must include the following five elements. Each element will be evaluated independently by the peer review panelist. The relative weight of the evaluation criteria in the determination of the grant award is listed below.

- a. **Project Description (30%):** This statement should describe why the applicant needs the grant funds, i.e., how the requested firefighters will be used within the department and a description of the specific benefit these firefighters will provide for the fire department and community. If the applicant is requesting funding under the rehiring of firefighters activity, the narrative should provide details as to when and why the vacancies occurred, and how the vacancies have affected the service to the community. Applications must also discuss how the grant would enhance the department's ability to protect critical infrastructure.
- b. **Impact on Daily Operations (30%):** This statement should explain how the community and current firefighters are at risk without the requested firefighters, and to what extent that risk will be reduced if the applicant is awarded. What impact will the newly funded positions have on NFPA and/or OSHA (1910.134) compliance?
- c. **Financial Need (30%):** This statement should explain the applicant's organizational budget and its inability to address the need without federal assistance, including other actions the applicant has taken to meet their staffing needs.
- d. **Cost/Benefit (10%):** This statement should explain, as clearly as possible, what benefits your department and/or your community will realize if the project described is funded (e.g., anticipated savings and/or efficiencies).
- e. **Performance (Additional Consideration):** Applicants should explain whether they have a proven record of accomplishment for timely project completion and satisfactory performance of other AFG, FP&S, and SAFER awards.

## 2. Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity Narrative Elements

The narrative statement for applications requesting funding for this activity must include the following five elements. The relative weight of the evaluation criteria in the determination of the grant award is listed below.

Each element will be evaluated independently by the peer review panelists:

- a. **Project Description (30%):** This statement should describe how the applicant will use the grant funds. The project description should include:
  - How the recruitment of new volunteer firefighters and/or retention of current volunteer firefighters will impact the department's or organization's identified operational needs or capabilities
  - A description of the specific benefit these firefighters will provide for the fire department(s) or community
  - A description of the recruitment and/or retention problems or issues the department has identified
  - How the activities being requested address those identified needs
  - Specifics about the recruitment and/or retention plan
  - If applicable, specifics about which activities are part of the regional request and which activities are exclusive to the host applicant
  - A list of the participating third-party organizations that will benefit from the regional project if the project is approved
- b. **Impact on Daily Operations (30%):** This statement should explain how the community and current firefighters (or geographic areas of concern for an eligible organization) are at risk without the requested firefighters, and to what extent that risk will be reduced if the applicant is awarded.
- c. **Financial Need (30%):** This statement should explain the applicant's organizational budget and its inability to address the need without federal assistance, including other actions the applicant has taken to meet their staffing needs.
- d. **Cost/Benefit (10%):** This statement should explain, as clearly as possible, what benefits your department and/or your community will realize if the project described is funded (e.g., anticipated savings and/or efficiencies). Is there a high benefit for the cost incurred? Are the costs reasonable? Provide justification for the budget items relating to the cost of the requested items.

- e. **Performance (Additional Consideration):** Applicants should explain whether they have a proven track record for timely project completion and satisfactory performance in other AFG, FP&S, and SAFER awards.

***Application Selection Process:***

**Specific Funding Parameters**

The appropriated funds are to be administered as indicated:

- 15 percent is set aside for the hiring of new firefighters.
- 10 percent is set aside for the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.
- 10 percent is set aside for grants awarded to volunteer or mostly volunteer departments for hiring of firefighters. A mostly volunteer fire department is made up of more than 50 percent of personnel who do not receive financial compensation for their services, other than life, health, and worker's compensation insurance, or a stipend payment such as paid-on-call. It may be necessary to go out of rank order to select a sufficient number of applications in order to meet the 10 percent requirement.
- If less than 10 percent of the funds available for the hiring of firefighters are awarded to volunteer and mostly volunteer fire departments, the remaining funds must be transferred to the provide grants for the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.