

Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Program

FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What's new for the FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program?

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- FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program applications must be submitted in the FEMA GO system.
- Job sharing (i.e., utilizing more than one person) to fill the SAFER-funded positions under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity is no longer eligible.
- The Staffing Maintenance Level is determined based on the budgeted operational positions at the time of the application, plus the number of SAFER Grant Program-funded positions.
- A logbook for the purchase and issuance of gift cards is now required for the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity. The logbook should include the name of the recipient, date, value of gift card, reason for issuance, and the signature of the recipient. Gift cards should be issued to operational firefighters who have completed the minimum firefighter training required by the authority having jurisdiction.

What is the purpose of the SAFER Grant Program?

The purpose of the SAFER Grant Program is to provide funding directly to fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations to assist with increasing the number of firefighters to help communities meet industry minimum standards, to attain 24-hour staffing to provide adequate protection from fire and fire-related hazards, and to fulfill traditional missions of fire departments.

To achieve this purpose, the SAFER Grant Program is a competitive, discretionary grant program comprised of two activities:

- 1) Hiring of Firefighters Activity** provides federal financial assistance to help fire departments hire new firefighters or change the status of part-time or paid-on-call firefighters to full-time firefighters. The goal is to improve fire department staffing levels to ensure that an adequate number of personnel respond and safely perform at incident scenes and provide protection from fire and fire-related hazards within communities. **This activity provides three-year grants to assist fire departments by paying a portion of the salaries and benefits of the SAFER-funded positions.**
- 2) Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity** assists fire departments and national, state, local, or federally recognized tribal organizations with the recruitment and/or retention of volunteer firefighters. The goal of this program is to create a net increase in the number of trained, certified, and competent firefighters capable of safely responding to emergencies likely to occur within the fire department's geographic response area. **Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity grants can have a period of performance of one to four years.**

How much funding is available for the FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program?

A total of \$350,000,000 has been appropriated for the FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program.

The following specific funding parameters are either required by law or are the outcome of recommendations from the Criteria Development Panel (CDP). Each requirement is identified below, followed by the source of the requirement which is noted in parentheses:

- 10 percent is set aside for the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters activity. (15 U.S.C. § 2229a(a)(2))

- No more than 33 percent of the total amount allocated for the recruitment and retention of volunteers can be awarded to national, state, local, or federally recognized tribal organizations that represent the interests of volunteer firefighters (CDP)
- 10 percent is set aside for grants awarded to volunteer or majority volunteer departments for the hiring of firefighters. A majority 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 nominal stipend payment, including certain paid-on-call personnel. 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. (15 U.S.C. § 2229a(a)(1)(H))

If less than 10 percent of the funds available for the hiring of firefighters are awarded to volunteer and majority volunteer fire departments, the remaining funds must be transferred to provide grants for the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. (15 U.S.C. § 2229a(a)(1)(H))

What is the maximum amount of funding an applicant can be awarded?

There is no maximum award amount for grant awards made under the FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program.

Can a department apply for both SAFER Grant Program activities - Hiring of Firefighters Activity and Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity?

Yes. However, departments interested in applying for both a Hiring of Firefighters Activity and a Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity grant must submit **two separate applications, one for each activity**. Each application will require unique narrative statements for all application sections.

Are SAFER Grant Programs “renewable” after the period of performance?

No. The SAFER Grant Program is a competitive/discretionary grant program. Program funding is not renewable, and funding is only available to grant recipients during the period of performance associated with the award. Current or former grant recipients do not have a competitive advantage over applicants who have not previously received a SAFER Grant Program award.

Hiring of Firefighters Activity

Who is eligible to apply for funding in the Hiring of Firefighters Activity?

Career, combination, and volunteer fire departments may apply for funding in the Hiring of Firefighters Activity.

What are the eligible expenses in the Hiring of Firefighters Activity?

Only the salary and associated benefits (actual payroll expenses) for the SAFER-funded positions are eligible. Costs are reimbursable only if they are included as a part of the standard salary and benefits package available to all operational firefighter positions and are contractually obligated. In addition, only the salary and benefit costs for regularly scheduled and contracted operational shift hours are eligible for reimbursement with SAFER Grant Program funding.

Will the SAFER Grant Program Hiring of Firefighters Activity pay for raises or increases to firefighter pay or benefits in years two and three?

No. The federal portion of grant funds for years one, two, and three is based on the usual annual cost of a first-year (i.e., entry-level) firefighter in your department at the time the grant application was submitted. “Usual annual costs” includes the base salary (excluding non-FLSA overtime) and the standard benefits package (including the **average** health cost, dental, vision, FICA, life insurance, retirement/pension, etc.) offered by fire departments to first-year (i.e., entry-level) firefighters

What are some of the expenses ineligible for reimbursement in the Hiring of Firefighters Activity?

- The salaries and benefits of full-time firefighters who are employees at the time of grant award are ineligible to be funded under this grant.
- Pre-application costs, such as grant writer fees, administrative costs (e.g., physicals/medical exams, background checks, etc.), and indirect costs associated with the hiring of firefighters are ineligible.
- Costs to train and equip firefighters (e.g., Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)/Turnout Gear) are ineligible. However, the salaries and benefits of SAFER Grant Program-funded firefighters—while engaged in training—are eligible.
- Costs for uniform allowances that are not contractually obligated and included as part of the standard benefits package for all employees or reimbursed via payroll are ineligible.
- Annual physical/medical exams and entry-level physical/medical exams for SAFER-funded positions are ineligible for reimbursement. Overtime costs (except overtime costs that are routinely paid as a part of the firefighter's regularly scheduled and contracted shift hours in order to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)) are ineligible.
- Costs to fund promotions (e.g., pay a current member a higher salary by placing them in a new SAFER-funded position) are ineligible.
- Job-shared positions (i.e., a position occupied by more than one person) are ineligible.

What type of firefighter positions will be funded?

Under the FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program, only new, additional full-time positions, or positions intended to change the status of part-time or paid-on-call firefighters to full-time firefighters will be funded. In either case, the positions must be above and beyond the budgeted number of positions at the time of application.

Full-time positions are those that are scheduled for at least 2,080 hours per year (e.g., 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year).

Since the goal of the SAFER Grant Program is to enhance incident scene safety, all applicants must certify that the primary assignment (more than 50 percent of the time) of all SAFER-funded positions will be on an operational fire suppression vehicle, regardless of collateral duties. Volunteer and mostly volunteer fire departments may hire individuals to fill officer-level positions (e.g., chief, fire inspector, training officer, safety officer, etc.) in addition to their primary operational assignment.

Is there a waiver that would allow us to retain firefighters facing layoff?

No. The SAFER Grant Program may only be used to hire new, additional firefighters or to change the status of part-time or paid-on-call firefighters to full-time firefighters. There is no waiver for this requirement.

How much time does a department have to hire SAFER Grant Program-funded positions?

For all grant recipients awarded under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity, a default 180-day recruitment period begins when the application is approved for an award (i.e., the offer of award date).

The three-year period of performance automatically begins after the 180-day recruitment period, regardless of whether the grant recipient has successfully hired the awarded positions or not. To maximize the available federal share of funding, departments should take steps to fill the SAFER-funded positions within the 180-day recruitment period. The salary and benefit costs for the SAFER-funded positions may only be billed to the grant during the period of performance.

There are no extensions to the grant period of performance. If a department experiences any delays in filling the SAFER Grant Program positions, the delay may lead to unexpended grant funding that must be returned to the Department of Treasury at the end of the period of performance. If the SAFER Grant Program positions are filled before the start of the period of performance, departments may submit an amendment requesting to start the grant period of performance early.

Can the start date of the period of performance be delayed if a department is unable to hire the SAFER-funded positions during the 180-day recruitment period?

No. The period of performance may not be delayed or started later than 180 days after the offer of award date.

What is the period of performance under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity?

The FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program period of performance for the Hiring of Firefighters Activity is a consecutive three-year period.

Are firefighters hired before the offer of award date eligible under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity?

No. Full-time firefighters hired before the offer of award date are ineligible under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity.

How does the SAFER Grant Program define the “offer of award date?” Is this the first day of the period of performance?

The SAFER Grant Program defines the “offer of award date” as the date that the SAFER Grant Program award notification letter is sent to the recipient through the FEMA GO system.

What are the cost-share requirements for the Hiring of Firefighters Activity?

The Hiring of Firefighters Activity award recipients are required to contribute non-Federal funding as described below.

Position Cost Limit (Waiver Available):

The amount of Federal funding provided to a recipient for hiring a firefighter in any fiscal year may not exceed—

- in the first and second years of the grant, 75 percent of the usual annual cost of a first-year firefighter employed by that department at the time the grant application was submitted; and
- in the third year of the grant, 35 percent of the usual annual cost of a first-year firefighter employed by that department at the time the grant application was submitted.

“Usual annual costs” includes the base salary (exclusive of non-FLSA overtime) and standard benefits package (including the **average** health, dental, and vision costs, FICA, life insurance, retirement/pension, etc.) offered by fire departments to first-year (i.e. entry-level) firefighters.

Cost Share (Wavier Available):

In addition to the Position Cost Limit, the Federal portion of the costs of hiring new firefighters under this grant may not exceed:

- 75 percent of the actual costs incurred in the first and second years of the grant; and
- 35 percent of the actual costs incurred in the third year of the grant.

What is a waiver?

In cases of demonstrated economic hardship, and upon the request of the recipient, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Administrator may waive or reduce the cost-share, position cost limit, minimum budget, or supplanting requirements. The SAFER Grant Program Hiring of Firefighters Activity grant recipients may apply for one, two, three, or all four of the available waivers.

How do I apply for a waiver?

Applicants must indicate their interest in applying for an economic hardship waiver within the FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program application and submit supporting documentation for the waiver(s) to the application.

What information is needed to support a waiver request?

FEMA has issued [Information Bulletin No. 427, Economic Hardship Waivers: AFG Grant Program, FP&S Grant Program, and SAFER Grant Program](#). Detailed information on the required documentation that must be

submitted for a waiver can be found in Information Bulletin No. 427.

Does a department have to retain the SAFER Grant Program-funded positions after the grant concludes?

No. FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program award recipients are under no obligation to retain the SAFER Grant Program-funded positions after the conclusion of the period of performance.

Are extensions to the SAFER Grant Program period of performance allowable under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity?

No. Extensions to the period of performance are not allowable under the FY 2019 Hiring of Firefighter Activity grants. Therefore, to maximize the available federal share of funds, departments should take the necessary steps to ensure all SAFER-funded positions are hired within the 180-day recruitment period or as close to the start of the period of performance as possible. Departments should also take active and timely steps to fill any SAFER Grant Program positions that become vacated during the grant period of performance. In writing an application, departments should carefully consider how many new firefighters they can realistically hire within the 180-day recruitment period.

Can Hiring of Firefighters Activity grant recipients submit a payment request for pre-award expenditures?

No. Pre-award expenditures are not reimbursable under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity. Only salary and benefit costs incurred during the grant's period of performance are allowable. **Full-time firefighters hired before the offer of award date are ineligible for SAFER Grant Program funding.**

The 2019 SAFER Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) states that grant recipients cannot layoff any firefighters during the period of performance. If the department loses positions due to retirement or other attrition, must those vacancies be filled?

Yes. During the grant period of performance, recipients of the FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program Hiring of Firefighters Activity are required to maintain the level of budgeted (filled and vacant positions) operational staffing that existed at the time of application, in addition to filling and retaining the SAFER Grant Program-funded positions.

Once awarded, grant recipients under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity must submit a pre-SAFER roster listing all paid operational/firefighting personnel (including budgeted but vacant positions) positions, in support of NFPA 1710 or NFPA 1720, as of the date the application was submitted. The paid operational/firefighting positions budgeted (filled and vacant positions) at the time of the application submission will be combined with the number of awarded SAFER Grant Program-funded positions to establish the required staffing maintenance level. Once the staffing maintenance level is established, grant recipients must agree to maintain this number of filled and vacant operational positions throughout the entire period of performance and take active and timely steps to fill any operational or SAFER Grant Program-funded vacancies.

Grant recipients who are unable to fill pre-SAFER (filled and vacant positions) firefighting positions (due to documented economic hardship) that are vacated through attrition (e.g., resignation, retirement) may petition FEMA for a waiver of the staffing maintenance level requirement. An approved staffing maintenance level waiver allows a grant recipient to decrease and re-establish the agreed-upon staffing maintenance level by the number of positions that a grant recipient is unable to fill. To qualify for this waiver, the economic hardship must affect the entire public safety sector in a grant recipient's jurisdiction, not solely the fire department. **Waivers will not be granted for SAFER-funded positions. Grant recipients who fail to maintain SAFER-funded positions risk losing federal funding awarded under this grant.**

How much time does a department have to fill an operational position that becomes vacant?

Departments must demonstrate that they are taking active and timely steps to fill any operational positions vacated during the grant's period of performance.

Is there an option for veteran's funding in the FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program?

No. There is no option for veteran's funding in the FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program.

Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity

Who is eligible to apply for funding of the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity?

Combination fire departments; volunteer fire departments; and national, state, local, or federally recognized tribal organizations that represent the interests of volunteer firefighters may apply for funding of the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity. Career fire departments are ineligible to apply for funding associated with this activity.

What are examples of eligible costs under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity?

Applicants must correlate the activities for which funding is being requested with the identified recruitment and/or retention problems/issues being addressed. Additionally, FEMA will not provide funding for a budgeted line item if an applicant does not provide enough information detailing how the item and/or activity will enhance the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.

For specific examples of eligible costs, please refer to Appendix B – Programmatic Information and Priorities in the FY 2019 SAFER NOFO.

What are some ineligible expenses in the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity?

Examples of ineligible expenses include but are not limited to the following:

- Costs incurred outside of the period of performance, except for grant writer fees as described in the FY 19 SAFER NOFO;
- Computers in common areas or individual computers for training/education;
- Salary and benefits for firefighters;
- Fire suppression equipment;
- Vehicles;
- Fire simulators, fire evolution, or fire training props (e.g., burn trailers, forcible entry, rescue/smoke maze, flashover simulator, etc.);
- Retroactive payments or recognition for non-operational activities (including payments, gift cards, recruitment bonuses, or stipends for recruiting firefighters);
- Annual medical exams (not including NFPA 1582 physicals for new recruits) for members on the department's membership roster before the offer of award date;
- Costs for training currently covered under the department's operating budget, such as tuition or instructor fees for department-mandated, basic-level training; and
- "Giveaways," such as pencils, pens, t-shirts, cups, mugs, or balloons for recruitment events.

For the full list of ineligible costs, please refer to Appendix B – Programmatic Information and Priorities in the FY 2019 SAFER NOFO.

What is a waiver?

In cases of demonstrated economic hardship, and upon the request of the recipient, the FEMA Administrator may waive or reduce the Minimum Budget Requirement under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity.

How do I apply for a waiver?

Applicants must indicate their interest in applying for an economic hardship waiver within the FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program online application and must attach supporting documentation to the application.

What information is needed to support our waiver request?

FEMA has issued [Information Bulletin No. 427, Economic Hardship Waivers: AFG Grant Program, FP&S Grant Program, and SAFER Grant Program](#). Detailed information on the documentation needed can be found in Information Bulletin No. 427.

How is “new recruit” defined according to the SAFER Grant Program?

The SAFER Grant Program defines a “new recruit” as someone who has joined the department as an operational/fire suppression member after the offer of award date (the date of the award notification email in FEMA GO) or an existing member who changes their status to an operational/fire suppression member after the offer of award date.

Is communications equipment eligible for reimbursement under the FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program?

No. All communications equipment including but not limited to cell phones, pagers, portable radios, or Computer-Aided Dispatch systems are ineligible for reimbursement under the FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program

Can Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) be purchased under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity? If so, what are the requirements?

Yes. OSHA-required and NFPA-compliant PPE is eligible for **new recruits only**, and reimbursement will be limited to the number of new recruits who have successfully passed an NFPA 1582-compliant physical exam and are certified as “fit for duty.” Only actual costs are allowed and will be paid on a reimbursable basis; costs may be limited to reasonable amounts as determined by FEMA based on current market research. Grant recipients will be required to provide documentation of completed NFPA 1582 physicals as well as documentation, including invoices and receipts, to support the purchase of the PPE.

Please refer to Appendix B – Programmatic Information and Priorities in the FY 2019 SAFER NOFO for additional details on eligible PPE expenditures and requirements.

What activities are allowable for new recruits only under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity?

PPE, station duty uniforms, and NFPA-1582 compliant physicals are only eligible for new recruits.

What types of tuition reimbursement are ineligible for reimbursement?

The FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program does not limit the type of tuition reimbursement an applicant may apply for, and funding for tuition does not have to be related to fire science or related fields. However, funding awarded for tuition reimbursement may not be used to repay current or past student loans. Only classes taken and completed during the period of performance are eligible for reimbursement under an approved tuition assistance line item.

Do Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity award recipients need to submit training certificates?

While grant recipients are not required to submit these documents, training certificates, as well as any grant-related documents, must be retained by the grant recipient for a minimum of three years after the submission of the final expenditure report. Please note that FEMA may request to review your grant file at any time. Files may need to be retained for a longer period, such as due to audit, litigation, or other review or for other reasons listed in 2 C.F.R. § 200.333.

Can a grant recipient submit a payment request for pre-award expenditures?

Generally, except for grant writer fees, pre-award expenditures are ineligible for reimbursement under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity. Only costs incurred during the grant period of performance are allowable and eligible for reimbursement.

See the Pre-Award Cost section in the FY 2019 NOFO for the specific requirements about pre-award costs.

Is there a matching funds/cost-share requirement for the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity?

No. There is no matching funds or cost-share requirement for this activity and there is no maximum federal share limit.

Is an extension to the SAFER Grant Program period of performance allowable under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity?

Extensions to the period of performance are generally unallowable. FEMA may consider extension requests only in extenuating circumstances (such as those fire departments whose operations were significantly impacted due to presidentially declared disasters).

Are administrative or indirect costs eligible for reimbursement?

Management & Administrative (M&A) are allowable but are limited to three percent of the total awarded amount.

Indirect costs are allowable under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity as described in 2 C.F.R. Part 200, including 2 C.F.R. § 200.414. Applicants with a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement that desire to charge indirect costs to an award must provide a copy of their negotiated indirect cost rate agreement at the time of application. Applicants that are not required by 2 C.F.R. Part 200 to have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement but are required by 2 C.F.R. Part 200 to develop an indirect cost rate proposal must provide a copy of their proposal at the time of application.

This indirect cost rate is established by a federal department or agency for the grant recipient's organization that the grant recipient uses to compute the dollar amount they can charge to the grant for indirect costs incurred during the execution of the grant agreement (Information about indirect cost rate agreements may be found at <http://rates.psc.gov/>).

Before submitting any claims for reimbursement of indirect costs, applicants must first submit a copy of their negotiated and approved indirect cost rate agreement or proposal, along with the SAFER application number, to FEMA at FireGrants@fema.dhs.gov for review and approval. The indirect cost rate is applicable as long as it is consistent with the established terms of the agreement.

What qualifies as a “nominal stipend?”

Nominal stipends are eligible for firefighters whose primary duty is an operational assignment (fire suppression), regardless of collateral duties. A stipend is nominal if it does not exceed 20 percent of what the fire department would otherwise pay to hire a full-time firefighter to perform the services for which the stipend is provided. The nominal stipend may include reimbursements to volunteer firefighters for approximate out-of-pocket expenses they incur during the period of performance. Whether a stipend falls above or below the 20 percent threshold may be determined in one of two ways. Departments that maintain paid full-time firefighters on their payrolls may compare the stipend to the salary paid to a full-time firefighter who performs similar duties to determine whether the stipend is more or less than 20 percent of that salary. Departments that do not maintain full-time firefighters on their payrolls may make the determination based on a comparison to the salary paid to a full-time firefighter in a neighboring jurisdiction, elsewhere in the state, or ultimately the nation. They may also utilize data from the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

If a stipend exceeds 20 percent of the prevailing wage, the firefighter receiving compensation would not qualify as a volunteer and would be considered an employee who may be covered by the FLSA minimum wage and overtime provisions. Therefore, they would be ineligible for a stipend under the grant.

How do you define a paid-on-call firefighter?

The FY 2019 SAFER NOFO defines paid-on-call firefighters as those who are paid a stipend for each event to which they respond. Paid-on-call firefighters may be considered paid firefighters or volunteer firefighters,

depending on whether the stipend they receive is a nominal stipend. For the purposes of the SAFER Grant Program, a department whose membership is comprised of all volunteer firefighters, including any paid-on-call firefighters who receive only a nominal stipend, will be considered a volunteer fire department. Also, for the purposes of this SAFER Grant Program, a department whose membership is comprised of any paid-on-call firefighters who receive more than a nominal stipend will be considered a combination fire department. Also, refer to the definition of a nominal stipend in the FY 2019 SAFER NOFO.

Recruitment and Retention Activity Regional Applications

Who may apply for a regional grant?

Eligible volunteer and combination fire departments may apply for regional Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity if their request will have a direct regional impact or local benefit beyond the immediate boundaries of the applicant's first-due response area. An eligible applicant will serve as the "host applicant" and should apply on behalf of the other fire departments benefitting from the grant.

Direct benefit means that other fire departments/organizations will receive a portion of the grant awarded funds, or the department will receive items purchased with the grant funds.

Note: The Hiring of Firefighters Activity is not eligible as a regional project.

I'm planning to apply as the host department for a regional project. How do I answer the questions in the online application?

When completing the application, the applicant must include a list of participating third-party organizations (including point of contact information) that will directly benefit if awarded. In completing the application, the regional applicant must include data that approximate the combined characteristics of all fire departments affected by the grant.

I'm applying as the host for a regional project, but I also have needs in my own department. Can I include my own department needs in the application?

Yes. An eligible applicant may act as a "host applicant" and apply for support of both a regional initiative and its own department's internal needs in one application.

A regional host must include a list of all the participating organizations, including the point of contact information and Employer Identification Number (EIN), benefitting from a proposed regional project, and provide clear and detailed information on which activities are regional-specific versus those that are host-specific.

If awarded, the host applicant must agree to be responsible for all aspects of the grant. This includes, but is not limited to, accountability for all assets and all reporting requirements. Regional host applicants and participating partner agencies must execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or equivalent document, signed by all parties participating in the award, before applying under the Regional Program activities.

Eligibility

Who is eligible for SAFER Grant Program funding?

Eligible departments or organizations are limited to one application for Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity funding and one application for Hiring of Firefighters Activity funding per application period. Your organization type determines your eligibility for SAFER Grant Program application categories.

Entity	Volunteer Fire Departments	Combination Fire Departments	Career Fire Departments	National, state, local, or federally recognized tribal volunteer firefighter interest organizations
Hiring of Firefighters Activity	✓	✓	✓	
Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity	✓	✓		✓

Can a career fire department apply under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity?

No. Career fire departments are ineligible to apply for Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity grant funding. They are only eligible for funding associated with the Hiring of Firefighters Activity.

I represent a volunteer firefighter interest organization that received a Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) Activity grant. Are we also eligible to receive additional funding from a SAFER Grant Program activity?

Yes. National, state, local, or federally recognized tribal volunteer firefighter interest organizations that represent the interests of volunteer firefighters are eligible to receive funding under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity regardless of whether they received an FP&S Activity grant. However, these organizations are ineligible for funding associated with the Hiring of Firefighters Activity.

If my fire department was recently awarded an AFG Grant, can we still apply for SAFER Grant Program funding?

Yes. While the SAFER Grant Program and the Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) are administered by the same office, there are no restrictions concerning one department having concurrent awards. However, the SAFER Grant Program award should supplement the AFG award and cannot be for the same activities or expenditures for the same members.

Is an independent rescue squad or emergency medical services unit eligible for SAFER Grant Program funding?

No. Independent rescue squads or emergency medical services units are ineligible for SAFER Grant Program funding. Only fire departments and national, state, local, or federally recognized tribal volunteer firefighter interest organizations are eligible for the SAFER Grant Program.

If my department was awarded SAFER Grant Program funding in a previous year that still has an active performance period, are we eligible to apply for additional SAFER Grant Program funding this year?

Yes. Applicants are eligible to receive and manage more than one SAFER Grant Program award. Applicants wishing to apply for additional grants are subject to the same guidelines and requirements as discussed in the FY 2019 SAFER NOFO and must indicate if the activities they are requesting are new initiatives or if they are building upon the previously awarded program. The grant activities requested in the new application should supplement the current award and cannot be for the same activities or expenditures for the same members as the currently awarded SAFER Grant Program.

Definition of Applicant Types

How do I determine whether I represent a volunteer, combination, or career fire department?

- A **volunteer fire department** has an all-volunteer force of firefighting personnel. For a fire department to have an all-volunteer force, no member may receive financial compensation (in the form of salary or wages) for their services other than life and health insurance, workers' compensation insurance, and/or a nominal stipend per call. FEMA considers a department to be a majority volunteer department if more than 50 percent of its membership is comprised of personnel who do not receive financial compensation for services.
- A **career department** has an all-paid force of firefighting personnel other than paid-on-call firefighters (fire departments that provide reimbursement on a paid-on-call basis are considered to be a combination fire department for the purposes of this program).
- A **combination department** has paid firefighting personnel and volunteer firefighting personnel. At a minimum, a combination fire department must have at least one active firefighter who receives financial compensation for services (including paid-on-call) and at least one active firefighter who does not receive financial compensation for services other than life, health, and workers' compensation insurance.

Additionally, a department whose membership is comprised of any paid-on-call firefighters who receive more than a nominal stipend is considered a combination fire department for the purposes of this program.

How do you define a national, state, local, or federally recognized tribal volunteer firefighter interest organization?

These are defined as organizations that support or represent the interests of firefighters to legislative bodies at the local, state, federally recognized tribal, and federal level. Such organizations include, but are not limited to, state or local firefighter and/or fire chiefs' associations, volunteer firefighter relief organizations, and associations. FEMA shall make the final determination as to whether a volunteer firefighter interest group applicant is eligible for SAFER Grant Program funding.

The SAFER Grant Program prohibits "for-profit" organizations from applying for grant funding. How do I determine if my department is a not-for-profit organization?

If you are a municipally based organization, (i.e., an organization providing services on behalf of a governmental entity), or if you are registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) corporation, you are eligible to receive SAFER Grant Program funding.

Completing the Application

When can I apply?

Applications will only be accepted only from 8:00 a.m. Eastern Time (ET) on **Monday, April 13, 2020**, until 5:00 p.m. ET on **Friday, May 15, 2020**.

When is the grant application due?

The application deadline is **Friday, May 15, 2020**. Applications must be received by 5:00 p.m. ET. Applications received after the close of the application period will not be accepted.

How do I access the FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program online application?

The online FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program application is available through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program's FEMA GO (FEMA Grants Outcomes) application portal at <https://go.fema.gov>. The application will also be linked with the US Fire Administration's (USFA) website <http://www.usfa.fema.gov> and the Grants.gov website <http://www.grants.gov>.

Can I apply for the FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program using a paper application process?

No. All FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program applications must be completed online through the FEMA GO system. However, the Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD) and/or Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) number available for this Notice is (800) 462-7585.

Technical Assistance to Applicants

Where can I obtain technical assistance in filling out the application?

The SAFER Grant Program Help Desk at 866-274-0960 will be available to provide technical assistance with completing your SAFER Grant Program Application.

Normal business hours for the Help Desk are Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Eastern Time (ET). During the application period, the Help Desk will be staffed between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday; and until 5:00 p.m. ET on **Friday, May 15, 2020**. However, these hours may change as the application period progresses. The toll-free number also accepts voicemail messages after hours or if the line is busy. Questions may also be e-mailed to FireGrants@fema.dhs.gov.

Which internet browsers are compatible with FEMA GO?

FEMA GO is compatible with Internet Explorer (version 11 or higher), Firefox (version 73 or higher), or Chrome (version 80 or higher). Users who attempt to use tablet type devices or other browsers may encounter issues with using FEMA GO.

What is the "Request Details" section of the application?

The Request Details section is where applicants answer activity-specific questions and enter the budget details of their grant proposal. This is the section where Departments enter the specific items or activities for which they are requesting SAFER Grant Program funding. Please note that activities noted in the narrative portion of the application, but not included in the Request Details section, will not be funded. Only items specifically noted in the Request Details section can be funded.

Do I need to register with SAM.gov?

Yes. Per 2 CFR § 25.205, SAM registration is required to both begin and submit a SAFER Grant Program application in the FEMA GO system. Organizational SAM.gov registrations are only active for one year and must be renewed annually. Therefore, applicants must ensure the applicant entity has a valid and active registration in SAM.gov before starting an application.

However, in conjunction with the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) memo, M-20-17, dated March 19, 2020, Administrative Relief for Recipients and Applicants of Federal Financial Assistance Directly Impacted by the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) due to Loss of Operations, FEMA is providing short-term flexibility with SAM registration (2 C.F.R. § 200.205) in that SAM registrations expiring before May 16, 2020 will be afforded a one-time 60-day extension. U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) will be automatically extending SAM registration by 60 days for existing registrations set to expire before May 17, 2020. Applicant should contact SAM.gov questions or concerns about their SAM registration.

Applicants who do not have a SAM registration will still need to register in order to begin an application.

FEMA may not make an award or provide an alternate application submission process to an entity until the entity has complied with the requirement to provide a valid DUNS number and maintain an active SAM.gov registration with current information. If the applicant is noncompliant with this requirement at the time of the application submission deadline, then the application will not be considered for a federal award.

The submission of payment requests and amendments are also contingent on the information provided in the

entity's SAM.gov registration. It is imperative that all information in the application is correct, current, and matches the information in the SAM.gov registration. Please ensure that your organization's name, address, DUNS number, and EIN are up to date in SAM.gov and that the DUNS number used in SAM.gov is the same number used to apply for all other FEMA grant program awards.

More information on SAM.gov may be located in the FY 19 SAFER NOFO and on the [AFGP Website](#). If applicants have questions or concerns about a SAM registration, please contact the Federal Support Desk at <https://www.fsd.gov/fsd-gov/home.do> or call toll free (866) 606-8220.

National Standards for the SAFER Grant Program

What standards does the SAFER Grant Program involve?

The industry minimum standards to be addressed by the SAFER Grant Program are the staffing and deployment sections of **NFPA 1710, Section 5.2.4.1 (Single Family Dwelling Initial Full Alarm Assignment Capability)**, which primarily applies to all-career fire departments and at the combination department's election; and **NFPA 1720 Section 4.3 (Staffing and Deployment)**, which primarily applies to all-volunteer fire departments and combination departments that do not elect to comply with NFPA 1710. The NFPA established a website providing information regarding these standards, available at <http://www.nfpa.org/freeaccess>.

NFPA 1001

Standard for Firefighter Professional Qualifications (FFI and II)

This standard identifies the minimum job performance requirements for career and volunteer firefighters whose duties are primarily structural in nature. The purpose of this standard is to specify the minimum job performance requirements for firefighters. It is not the intent of the standard to restrict any jurisdiction from exceeding these requirements.

NFPA 1582

Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments

To help fire departments ensure that personnel are medically capable of performing their required duties, the 2013 NFPA 1582 incorporates current research and knowledge to present the latest provisions for a comprehensive occupational medical program. The Standard provides separate chapters for the medical evaluation of candidates/prospective employees and for the occupational medical and fitness evaluations for fire department members. Requirements are evaluated against the essential job tasks based on several NFPA Professional Qualification Standards and apply to career, volunteer, private, industrial, governmental, and military fire departments. For specific physical requirements, Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity applicants should refer to **NFPA 1582 Chapter 6, Medical Evaluations of Candidates 6.1** and **Chapter 9, Essential Job Tasks — Specific Evaluation of Medical Conditions in Members** (<http://www.nfpa.org/freeaccess>).

Additional information on implementing NFPA 1582 physicals can also be found at <https://fstaresearch.org/roadmap>.

National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS)

Do applicants who apply for SAFER Grant Program funding have to report to the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS)?

No. FEMA does not require FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program applicants to report to NFIRS.

National Incident Management Systems (NIMS)

Do fire departments that receive SAFER Grant Program funding awards have to comply with the requirements of the National Incident Management System (NIMS)?

Yes. Any applicant who receives an FY 2019 SAFER Grant Program funding award must achieve the level of NIMS compliance required by the authority having command and control jurisdiction over the applicant's emergency service operations, before the end of the grant's period of performance. SAFER Grant Program applicants are not required to comply with NIMS either to apply for SAFER Grant Program funding or to receive a SAFER Grant Program funding award.

For Regional applications, are all the benefiting fire departments required to be NIMS compliant or just the host applicant?

Yes. All departments receiving equipment or services from a regional SAFER Grant Program must be compliant with all local edicts regarding NIMS.

Help FEMA Prevent Fraud, Waste, and Abuse

If applicants or recipients have information about instances of fraud, waste, abuse, or mismanagement involving FEMA programs or operations, they should contact the DHS OIG Hotline at (800) 323-8603, by fax at (202) 254-4297, or email DHSOIGHOTLINE@dhs.gov