

Main Narratives

Element #1 Project Description (30%)

1a. Why does the department need the positions requested in this application? (3,000 characters)

The Country Club Hills Fire Department is a combination department, serving an urban/suburban area that protects 16,541 people in a 4.84 square mile area. The department is currently comprised of 17 career members, 15 of whom are shift personnel, assisted by 19 Part time firefighter/ paramedics of varying experience and qualification levels. Despite a relatively consistent population we are experiencing around a 6% average growth in call volume each year.

Our request for career staffing is based on a staffing assessment performed in conjunction with our NFPA 1710 reporting requirements. The staffing assessment focuses on hiring additional firefighters to bring the engine company staffing to 4 personnel and the overall initial fire ground staffing to meet NFPA 1710 guidelines.

The department is requesting SAFER funding of \$901,560 for 6 additional career personnel over the grant period. These firefighters will increase staffing on our two engine companies from 3 to 4 personnel, and allow both engines operate with 2 personnel each to remain in service when crews cross staff the ALS transport units. Due to the current condition of local, state and national economies; the City Administration believes they can support 6 additional firefighter/ paramedics following the grant funding with new revenues from a large outlet mall scheduled to break ground this spring and be operational in two years. Through budgeting and new revenue sources city administration intends to sustain these positions beyond the grant period. The hope is that we will be able to add 6 this year in order to bolster our minimum staffing. Our project coordinator is Deputy Chief Robert Kopec, who, with the support of the Fire Chief, IAFF Local 2720 and City administration is submitting our request. The Aldermen of the City of Country Club Hills realize the importance and the commitment this grant requires. The City Council actively supports and approves this SAFER grant application as they would support and approve additional staffing if city finances allowed.

The current minimum on-duty daily staffing of the Country Club Hills Fire Department is 6 shift personnel divided between two stations; leaving just 3 personnel per station to staff ALS Ambulance, Engine at station #1 and jump between engine and Truck based on hazard type. The employment of 2 career lieutenant/ paramedics, 2 career Engineer/paramedics and 1 career firefighter/ paramedic accomplishes part of the daily staffing. After requests for vacation, sick time, personal time, training time and Kelly days our staffing will drop to 3 career personnel per shift. We rely on 3 part time personnel to meet our daily staffing requirement of 6. During the work day, this minimum staffing is supplemented by the administrative staff of 2 (Chief and Deputy Chief) when not occupied with other duties. At minimum staffing 1 person will staff the engine/ truck while two personnel staff the primary ambulances at each station. The community is urban/ suburban in nature and seeks to comply with the staffing requirements of NFPA 1710.

In order to comply with NFPA 1710, the department must initially have 15 trained firefighters on the scene of a fire within 9-minutes 90% of the time. A review of our NFIRS data shows we had 76 structure fire calls in 2014, 83 structure fire calls in 2013, and 92 structure fire calls in 2012. Currently, we were able to comply with NFPA 1710's 4-minute service delivery standard 97% of the time with 2 engines with

4 firefighter/ paramedics, but the 9-minute initial alarm assignment on only 33% of those calls. On all structural fire responses we receive automatic aid from multiple neighboring departments. The Hazel Crest Fire Department is always due with a truck company and either the Flossmoor or Oak Forest fire departments are due with an engine company depending on the location of the incident. The Homewood Fire Department is also responding on all structure fires with an additional truck company as a dedicated Rapid Intervention Team (RIT). The average response time for the automatic aid departments varies greatly, but all generally fall within the 9-minute time frame. The auto aid is valuable but is not guaranteed. Auto aid companies are comprised of both career and combination departments that face similar staffing challenges compounded with increasing requests for service. In the event the incident requires additional alarms; mutual aid companies are assigned through our MABAS Division 24.

The department has a general alarm/ call back system to attempt to recall all available off-duty personnel. The call back personnel respond to staff the station during fire calls and during multiple ambulance calls. This staffing is extremely limited due to off duty related obligations and in part cause most part time personnel work other jobs. On average 1 person will respond to a general alarm/ all call.

Currently, both stations respond when available with 3 personnel per engine along with our auto aid companies giving us an average response of 13-15 firefighters within 9-minutes when available. The additional requested firefighter positions will increase our engine's staffing to 4 firefighters; which coupled with our automatic aid departments, will give us 15-17 firefighters on the scene within 9-minutes at least 90% of the time to successfully comply with NFPA 1710. Our current staffing levels indicate we are 2 firefighters short per shift of compliance with the NFPA 1710 standard.

The system of combined staffing utilizing part time staff, along with working towards increasing the staffing of our duty engines to 4, will help the department maintain at least 2-4 person engine companies even during times of multiple calls. In the year 2014, the department had 336 times when there were multiple calls in progress simultaneously, which routinely impacted the staffing of our engine companies.

1b. How will the positions requested in this application be used within the department (i.e., 4th on engine, open a new station, eliminate browned out stations, reduce overtime (provide additional details as to how this will occur)? (1,000 characters)

The addition of 6 career members 2 per shift as requested transcends a number of operational, safety and management priorities. If awarded, the grant would allow us to improve efficiency/safety on the fire ground, bring us into compliance with national standards (NFPA 1710) and improve our overall ability to deliver quality fire protection to our City. The addition of two members to each shift would allow our department to reach a milestone; 2 fully staffed Engines/ truck Company with 4-personnel each, as set forth by NFPA 1710.

1c. What are the specific benefits the positions requested in this application will provide to the department and community? (1,000 characters)

The first benefit from being awarded the grant would be improved efficiency in extinguishing fires. Based on a 1998 International City Managers Association study which demonstrated how additional personnel can directly impact the ability to save lives, protect firefighters and limit property loss; we

expect to improve efficiency by at least 30% by increasing from a 3-member crew to a 4-member crew. These statistics were echoed in the NIST Report on Residential Fire ground Field Experiments of 2010.

Another benefit spanning numerous benchmarks within the fire service is in regards to how a department's efficiency is measured. Our increased staffing would allow us to seek an improved Insurance Services Organization (ISO) rating. Our current rating is a 5 and as noted in our audit, additional personnel to offset the impact of EMS requirements would influence our rating. The benefit of an increased rating is the community realizes decreases in insurance rates, making our community more marketable; attracting additional growth and tax dollars.

According to OSHA regulations, an interior fire attack cannot be started until 4 fully trained firefighters are on the scene. Additionally, due to our call volume (2,588 calls in 2014, 2,432 in 2013, 2,392 in 2012); our ambulances are often out on a call leaving only 1 person per station to respond on the engine/truck. 1 –person x2 engine response requires us to wait on the scene for additional apparatus from our department's automatic/mutual aid departments to arrive to begin fire attack. This allows the fire to grow in size, which increases the risk to our firefighters when they do enter the structure. In recent studies by NIST additional hazards from rapid fire spread include flashover and increased potential for building collapse/ failure especially with modern lightweight building construction. Five years ago our department responded to a neighboring community for a residential structure fire. They, like us, also face below standard staffing level and unfortunately one of their members paid the ultimate sacrifice. Due to rapid fire spread and delayed fire attack our division endured a line of duty death. The search for potential unknown victims in the structure may be delayed until additional units arrive on the scene. In addition, increased property damage can occur because of the delay of an interior attack.

The department would also make great strides in achieving compliance with staffing standards set forth by the International City Manager's Association of 1.49 firefighters per 1000 residents. Additional personnel would also be instrumental in meeting response time guidelines set forth in both the NFPA and the Commission on Fire Accreditation International. Finally, the increase in staffing will allow us to send 2 apparatus with 2 personnel each in the event we are on double EMS calls. Having 4 firefighter/ paramedics on scene meets the 2 in 2 out standard. This allows us the ability to begin an interior fire attack and search for potential victims without having to wait for auto aid companies.

1d. Please describe how the awarding of this grant would enhance the departments ability to protect the critical infrastructure discussed in the Applicant Characteristics section of the application. (1,000 characters)

The ability to adequately protect critical infrastructure creates unique challenges while working with limited staffing. Critical infrastructure and high target facilities require additional personnel as set forth in NFPA 1710, however by increasing our daily staffing by 25% will directly result in the department's ability to ensure that critical objectives are met while mitigating incidents in these type facilities. The City of Country Club Hills currently has 1 high rise, 2 additional 4 story assisted residential assisted living facilities in addition to 2 major interstates and a major pipeline along with a large electrical sub-station that supplies power to a large hospital located just outside our primary response area. Mitigating emergencies quickly, efficiently and safely has a direct impact on not only our city but also those that

rely on these critical infrastructures on a daily basis. Failure of these systems or fires creates life safety, property loss issues and potential catastrophic financial losses.

Additional staffing will directly increase the departments' ability to place adequate apparatus/personnel on the scene of a fire to deliver the calculated average fire flow needed to buildings in our community. The addition of 2 personnel per shift will not attain the 24-26 personnel referenced in NFPA, however does get the department closer to compliance by assigning 13-15 personnel on the initial alarm.

****Element #2 - Impact on Daily Operations (30%):***

2a. How are the community and the current firefighters employed by the department at risk without the positions requested in this application? (1,000 characters)

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) studies of firefighter fatalities have consistently identified inadequate staffing as a key factor in line of duty deaths. The Country Club Hills Fire Department recognizes this factor and how it hinders our ability to operate efficiently and safely. To better identify our specific staffing needs, the department conducted a staffing self analysis. The analysis criteria included staffing standards from NFPA 1710, ISO, ICMA and factored required fire flows for the types of risks in our community.

To illustrate the condition of our current staffing situation, our last ISO evaluation noted a number of significant issues. Two of these issues dealt directly with staffing and the department's ability to service the community.

One issue cited was our inability to place adequate apparatus/personnel on the scene of a fire to deliver the calculated average fire flow needed to buildings in our community. The addition of personnel will help us to deliver the flow required, while also addressing the needs of adequate personnel to safely and effectively combat the fire. Expanded staffing in conjunction with increased utilization of automatic aid are key steps in meeting the recommendations in this area.

The lack of adequate personnel on scene to complete tasks hampers safe operations on the fire ground. The efficient attack of the fire is delayed due to critical support functions not being completed in a timely manner. Currently, with 6 total personnel on scene initially we cannot accomplish the required tasks for a proper coordinated fire attack. One officer has to operate as command and one engineer is needed as a pump operator leaving four personnel to accomplish fire attack, ventilation and search operations. When critical tasks cannot be accomplished safely and effectively we are putting our personnel at greater risk for injury and death and putting our residents in the same category.

2b. How will that risk be reduced if awarded the positions requested in this application? (1,000 characters)

In a Seattle Fire Department study, the average time (as reflected in hours of disability) lost was 54% greater in 3-member companies as compared to 4-member companies. The addition of another member to shift will decrease the work load and allow for members to be assigned to specific tasks. This will translate to members being able to focus on their assignments and will lessen disabling injuries as reflected in this study.

Our evaluation concluded daily staffing should be at a minimum of 8-10 members to fully meet the criteria set forth by the analysis. Our current minimum staffing of 6 personnel does not allow us to meet basic on scene requirements. The addition of 2 personnel per shift will significantly increase our ability to complete tasks in a timely fashion, avoid fatigue of members and provide a safer and controlled environment on the scene of an incident. Though, far from a complete solution to our problems, additional members are a positive step in the right direction. The additional full time shift personnel will help to ensure we maintain eight firefighters coverage seven days a week to meet the service needs of our community. These additional personnel would also provide assistance with any all call/ general alarms within in our community or while assisting other communities with auto aid/ mutual aid incidents.

2c. What impact will the positions requested in this application have on the departments NFPA compliance, if awarded? (2,000 characters)

The Country Club Hills Fire Department, its members and our community would benefit from the additional members requested in this grant proposal. Additional members on each shift allows us to meet numerous, critical objectives while providing for the fire service needs of the community. These include increasing our cadre of frontline firefighters who enhance our ability to provide 24 hour staffing assuring increased fire protection. With additional daily staffing it allows us to meet compliance with NFPA 1710. Although we are a combination department we strive to attain compliance with NFPA 1710.

Our evaluation concluded daily staffing should be at a minimum of 8-10 members to fully meet the criteria set forth by the analysis. Our current minimum staffing of 6 personnel does not allow us to meet basic on scene requirements. The addition of 2 personnel per shift will significantly increase our ability to complete tasks in a timely fashion, avoid fatigue of members and provide a safer and controlled environment on the scene of an incident. Though, far from a complete solution to our problems, additional members are a positive step in the right direction. The additional full time shift personnel will help to ensure we maintain 8 firefighters on duty seven days a week 24 hours a day to meet the fire needs of our community. The addition of 2 personnel per day translates into a 25% increase in staffing per shift, thus resulting in our departments ability meet NFPA 1710 standard of 4 personnel per unit 90% of the time within 4 minutes.

****Element #3 - Financial Need (30%):***

3a. Please provide additional details on the departments operating budget, to include a breakdown of the budget, as indicated in Applicant Characteristics section of the application. (2,000 characters)

The City of Country Club Hills, like many communities, has been faced with steep increases in expenditures exceeding increases in revenue. Country Club Hills is a financially challenged municipality to say the least, a product of economic depletion as the commercial economy has dwindled. Though not fundamentally poor, the City is exceptionally cash strapped, finding many more needs than available funding on an ongoing basis. The per capita income for the City is \$25,563; over 7% of the population and 8.9% of families are below the poverty line and this number is on the rise (2010 Census).

Our current fiscal budget paints the realities that create the challenge of providing life saving services while operating within our financial constraints. The Country Club Hills 2014- 2015 budget breaks down as follows: (Numbers in whole dollars)

Personnel	\$ 2,157,364
Maintenance/ Fuel	\$ 88,000
Apparatus/ Equipment Payments (annual)	\$ 131,940
Training/ Professional Development	\$ 29,360
Uniforms	\$ 17,000
Building Maintenance	\$42,040
Insurance/ Risk	\$ 25,000
Total Operating Budget (\$ 2,595,906)	\$ 2,490,704 (96%)

The department's annual operating budget of \$ 2,595,906 at first glance may appear adequate, but with closer examination only leaves \$105,202 or 4% to cover daily necessities and miscellaneous expenses. Personnel expenses currently accounts for 83% of the total budget. Another expense we are experiencing is hiring, training and outfitting new part time firefighter paramedics. There is a large cost incurred with little guarantee of retention. On average we invest \$ 9,000 from application and testing expenses to 60 hours of new candidate and observation training. After these expense and basic training it takes another 90 days till the candidate can be released to be cleared on shift. Unfortunately for our department we are losing a substantial percentage of new part time personnel to full time jobs. A sizeable percentage of our part time candidates range between 21-28 years old and are seeking full time employment in the fire service. With the addition of 6 additional career personnel it will add stability to our department while help alleviate some additional expenses.

3b. Please describe the department's budget shortfalls and the inability to address the financial needs without federal assistance. (1,000 characters)

The City has seen a minimal increase in overall revenues; unfortunately we have lost a large retail complex as a result of the economic downturn and are faced with a second large retail complex that is straining to maintain profitability. Income taxes, motor fuel taxes and other forms of revenue have been reduced by the state, further compounding an already difficult and stagnant financial situation.

Though at first glance the Country Club Hills Fire Department's budget appears ample, closer examination would reveal employee related expenses swiftly devour this budget. Subtract the 83%, required for personnel support costs and the significant percentages for apparatus/facility maintenance, and little remains to purchase everything from exam gloves to office supplies. Each year the department finds it more and more difficult to maintain the "status quo" while struggling with the steep uphill battle for our piece of the budget pie.

3c. Please discuss other actions the department has taken to meet their staffing needs (i.e., state assistance programs, other grant programs, etc.). (1,000 characters)

Efforts to seek additional personnel have been rebuffed by City Administration and the City Council who are extremely reluctant to increase property taxes, already considered to be some of the highest in the region, to meet the Fire Department's need. The city's current property tax rate is 8.813 and is on the high end as compared to averages nationally with the exception of the Northeast part of the country. We have recently endured a large amount of foreclosed residential properties as many other communities have been faced with, however many ours have been directly related to the high tax rate. The department has also attempted to secure previous SAFER grant funding but was unsuccessful. The

ability to hire additional personnel immediately while allowing the City two years to fund the additional personnel is more palatable to all parties involved and would allow staffing to be increased, while impacting the overall budget minimally over time. A SAFER grant is just what the doctor ordered to fill this need.

****Element #4 - Cost Benefit (10%):***

1a. Please describe the benefits (i.e., anticipated savings, efficiencies) the department and community will realize if awarded the positions requested in this application. (1,000 characters)

One firefighter dies somewhere in America approximately every eighty hours” according to Chief Ron Siranacki at a Firefighter Life Safety Summit. The loss of a firefighter to their family, the department and the community cannot be translated into dollars and cents. Successful procurement of additional personnel through the grant process will help to provide for the safety of our members and will be a vital asset to our community.

Our average residential fire loss over the last three years is \$285,064 annually. Having the ability to keep both engines staffed to make an aggressive fire attack at just one residence per year, or to make one “save” on a potential victim, we will have balanced out the funding requested in the grant.

***Element #5 - Additional Information: If you have any additional information you would like to include about the department and/or this application in general, please provide below. (2,000 characters)**

On behalf of the City of Country Club Hills, our residents and firefighters we would like to thank you for taking the time to review our request for SAFER grant funding.

Additional Narratives Required

****Note all sections in “additional narratives” are limited to 3,000 characters.***

- **Please provide details on the department's existing staffing model (i.e., number of shifts, number of positions per shift, contracted work hours, etc.)**

The Country Club Hills Fire Department operates a platoon shift schedule. Three shifts consisting of 5 career firefighter/ paramedics (minimum staffing is 6) working a 24 hour on 48 hour off work schedule. Career personnel are contracted to work 2,708 annually with Kelly days. The department operates 2 fire stations located within the city each staffed with 3 personnel per shift consisting of 1 lieutenant/ paramedic and 1 engineer/ paramedic assigned per station leaving 1 firefighter/ paramedic assigned to either of the two stations. The shortfall in staffing is accomplished with the use of part time firefighter/ Paramedics that supplement 1 to 3 firefighter/ paramedic positions per shift. Administrative positions include both a full time chief and deputy chief along with one administrative assistant. The chiefs are assigned a 40 hour week schedule and are available for call backs 24/7.

- **Does your department utilize part-time paid firefighters? If Yes, please provide details on how the part-time firefighters are used within your department to include the number of part-time firefighters, the number of full-time, NFPA compliant positions these part-time firefighters occupy, if applicable, and how they are scheduled to meet your staffing needs.**

The Country Club Hills Fire Department utilizes part time firefighter/ paramedics to attain our daily minimum staffing level of 6 personnel per shift. With maximum available full time members being 5 and as low as 3 due to Kelly days and other benefit time the department relies on scheduling 1-3 part time personnel per shift. The part time shift schedule is broke into 12 hour shifts, allowing them to work 12 or 24 hour shifts based on availability. The part time personnel are hired through an application review and interview process comprised of administrative staff and full time personnel. The next step in the process is detailed background investigation conducted by the local police department, physiological and polygraph examinations. In addition part time personnel are required to be a certified firefighter II through the Office of the State Fire Marshall, a certified paramedic through the State of Illinois and hold a current Candidate Physical Agility Test (CPAT) card. The part time personnel fall under the same job requirements as a full time firefighter paramedic and receive the same training program and standards.

- **Does your department utilize reserve/relief paid firefighters? If yes, please provide details on how the reserve/relief firefighters are used within your department to include the number of reserve/relief firefighters, the number of full-time, NFPA compliant positions these part-time firefighters occupy, if applicable, and how they are scheduled to meet your staffing needs**

N/A

- At the time of application, how many active volunteer firefighters are in your department?

N/A

- If awarded this grant, how many active volunteer firefighters will be in your department?

N/A

- Does your department have any rainy day funds, rainy day reserves, or emergency funds?

- **Briefly describe the departments hiring practices and timelines.**

All candidates hired by the Country Club Hills Fire Department are required to be a State Certified Firefighter-2 and a Licensed Paramedic through the State of Illinois. Members hired under this grant, would have to attain both certifications by their date of appointment. The candidates must successfully complete a civil service examination process which includes written examination and an oral interview process in order to be placed on the eligibility list. The list established shall rank from the highest passing score to the lowest passing score established by the board of fire and police commission. Additional advanced certifications would be integrated into the new firefighters continuing training and advancement program.

Candidates hired through SAFER grant funding would be hired of the current eligibility list. The department along with the police and fire commission are currently in the process of administering a candidate test to establish a new eligibility list. Through Illinois civil service law a new eligibility list shall be established every two years. Hiring of addition personnel would commence immediately upon successfully being awarded grant funding.

The department has in place a pre-employment physical administered under NFPA guidelines, and members are provided vaccinations and ongoing physical exams. Members are required, by policy, to

participate in fitness training while on shift and we provide nutrition and exercise guidance in order to assist in maintaining their health and welfare.

The Country Club Hills Fire Department and the City of Country Club Hills are equal-opportunity employers who currently have African American, Hispanic, Asian and female members in their ranks. The fire department routinely visits job fairs and similar activities in Chicago and the surrounding areas. We pledge to continue and expand our diversity in recruiting members from minority groups whenever and wherever possible.

- **Is your request for hiring firefighters based on a risk analysis and/or a staffing needs analysis?**

Our request for career staffing is based on a staffing assessment performed in conjunction with our NFPA 1710 reporting requirements. The staffing assessment focuses on hiring additional firefighters to bring the engine company staffing to 4 personnel and the overall initial fire ground staffing to within 1710 guidelines.

Our evaluation concluded daily staffing should be at a minimum of 8-10 members to fully meet the criteria set forth by the analysis. Our current minimum staffing of 6 personnel does not allow us to meet basic on scene requirements. The addition of 2 personnel per shift will significantly increase our ability to complete tasks in a timely fashion, avoid fatigue of members and provide a safer and controlled environment on the scene of an incident. Though, far from a complete solution to our problems, additional members are a positive step in the right direction. The additional full time shift members would help to ensure we maintain eight firefighters coverage seven days a week to meet the fire needs of our community.

- **Does your department currently have a policy ensuring that positions filled under this grant are not discriminated against, or prohibited from, engaging in volunteer firefighting activities in another jurisdiction during off-duty hours?**

The City of Country Club Hills is an equal opportunity employer and has a continuing policy of non-discrimination on the basis of age, sex, race, marital status, national origin, religion, or sexual preference. We make special mention in all of our promotional materials, presentations and at job fairs that we especially encourage women and minorities to join our ranks. We welcome all prospective members equally. We will also continue to take special care to recruit from those areas of our district that have a greater percentage of racial and ethnic minorities. At this time, the department's membership currently includes 4 female members, including 2 career female firefighter/ paramedic. The Country Club Hills Fire Department was one of the first departments in our area to embrace the hiring of females and minorities and it is our pledge to continue to pursue these types of candidates.

The Country Club Hills Fire Department's policies do not prohibit any off-duty employment activities of our members. This would include working for or volunteering at another fire department.

- **Does your department currently have a policy in place to recruit and hire veterans?**

Currently the department does not have a policy specific to recruiting and hiring veterans. Under the current civil rules veterans are eligible for 5 preference points applied toward their overall score on the eligibility test. The department has assisted 2 local veterans recently in attaining firefighter-2, EMT-B and paramedic through sponsorship.

- **Is it your department's intent to sustain the positions filled under this grant after the completion of the period of performance?**

Both the Country Club Hills Fire Department and the City of Country Club Hills intend upon completion of SAFER grant funding to sustain the personnel acquired through the federal assistance. Through the budget process both fire and city administration plan to increase the personnel budget to maintain the staffing level to ensure the community, guests and the firefighters that serve them are adequately protected. The City is hopeful that a long awaited outlet mall development that is scheduled to break ground this spring will be a welcomed source of new revenue.

- **In order to ensure that there is a clear understanding of the long-term obligations of a SAFER grant and that, if awarded, all parties involved are committed to fulfilling those requirements upon acceptance of the award; we are requesting a letter from your governing body stating their commitment of the above requirement.**

The letter should be prepared on your governing body's letterhead and addressed to:

Catherine Patterson, Branch Chief

Assistance to Firefighters Grants Branch

DHS/FEMA

800 K Street NW Mailstop 3620

Washington DC 20472-3620