



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

Overview

Administered through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the goal of SAFER is to assist local fire departments with staffing and deployment capabilities in order to respond to emergencies, and assure that communities have adequate protection from fire and fire-related hazards. More than \$345 million is available in this cycle.

All SAFER applicants should read the Guidance to fully understand the award criteria, funding priorities and important special application instructions for completing the application. **Grant funds can only be used to hire personnel at the entry level fire fighter base pay and benefits rate, and the requested positions cannot be employed at the time of award.**

The Guidance, Application Kit, and other materials are posted on the [Assistance to Firefighters web site](#). Additionally information and assistance, including a SAFER guidance documents and example narratives, are available on the [IAFF Grants Department website](#). If you have additional questions, please contact the IAFF grants department at 202-824-1575 or firegrants@iaff.org.

Requesting a Review by IAFF Staff

The IAFF Grants Department is available to assist IAFF affiliates and their fire departments through the application process. To request a review of an application prior to submission, affiliates can send their completed application, including both the data entry and narrative portions, to the IAFF Grants Department at firegrants@iaff.org.

There are two options for sending your grant for review:

1. Provide your User Name and Password so we can perform a comprehensive review of all sections of the grant. We ask that you send the narrative sections in a separate Microsoft Word document so we can make comments directly in the document.

2. Print out the relevant sections for us to review. If you have Abode software you should be able to print directly to a .pdf document and email. You will need to navigate to the “print tab” within the application. Once there, you can print each individual section. **Note you can only print the entire application once it is submitted.**
 - a. Please keep in mind we need the pages dealing with staffing count and NFPA compliance chart.
 - i. To access the NFPA staffing chart, you’ll need to expand the “Request Details” section: Request Details->View Details (lower right corner of screen)->Update Button (the upper update button across from the hiring of fire fighters line).
 - ii. Now print that page with that starts with the NFPA 1710/1720 chart at the top.
 - iii. How to print to a PDF document in Windows:
 1. Open a file in a Windows application.
 2. Choose File > Print.
 3. Choose Adobe PDF as the printer in the Print dialog box.
 - a. Not all computers have this option, if not displayed you may not have the capability and will need to use another computer.
 4. Click “Print”
 5. Name the PDF file and save it in the desired location.

Data Entry Section and Supporting Narratives

The IAFF has blank copies of the application available if you need to start compiling the required information and do not have immediate access to the online application. Please email firegrants@iaff.org and we will provide the materials. Also note that FEMA has provided “Help” buttons within the application that provide additional explanation for terms in the application.

The data entry section has a number of sections (“tabs”) where you must enter department information, including points of contact, call volume, and many other data points. Most of the questions are self-explanatory, however, we have provided some details below on specific questions to ensure you score competitively.

There are also a number of smaller narratives required within the data section which are also detailed below. These are separate and distinct from the narratives required at the end of the application.

Applicant Information

- Data Section
 - Be sure you enter your SAM information correctly.
 - If awarded, will your organization expend more than \$750,000 in Federal funds during your organization's fiscal year? If yes, your organization may be required to undergo an A-133 audit. Under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Category, reasonable costs incurred for an A-133 audit is an eligible expenditure and should be included in the applicant's proposed budget. (4,000 characters)
 - Check with your jurisdiction’s budget and finance office for the answer to this question.

Applicant Characteristics (Part I)

- Data Section
 - Always select “Yes” to protecting critical infrastructure! You will provide details in the narrative.
 - If you have mutual/auto aid agreements, make sure to mention this in the cost benefit main narratives and provide details on how often you respond, whether you are the only career staffed dept. avail, etc.
- Narratives
 - Please describe your organization and/or the community that you serve. (2,000 characters)
 - Keep the details relevant to your department. What can you tell the reviewers to give them an idea of your risk and unique aspects of protecting your community?
 - Number of residents served
 - Number of square miles protected
 - Number and types of responses
 - Describe the area you protect
 - What are your community’s greatest needs, risks and challenges and how does your request address these.
 - Does your organization protect critical infrastructure? If Yes, please describe the critical infrastructure protected. (3,000 characters)
 - Critical infrastructure protected by your organization
 - Water treatment locations, power plants, stadiums, national security facilities, etc.
 - Terrorism concerns
 - Consider schools, public facilities, police, fire, post office, etc.
 - Major employers/Sources of substantial tax revenue for jurisdiction
 - Please provide details on the department's existing staffing model (i.e., number of shifts, number of positions per shift, contracted work hours, etc.) (3,000 characters)
 - What is your typical daily staffing?
 - How do you staff apparatus?
 - If using jump crews, how often are all personnel available for fire response?
 - Do you backfill with overtime, and if so, what are the costs associated with this?
 - Detail stress levels of providers if appropriate.
 - 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. (3,000 characters)

- 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. (3,000 characters)

Applicant Characteristics (Part II)

- Data Section
 - If you show an increase in your year over year budget you will need to provide an explanation in the main narratives financial need section.
 - Ensure that you have included all personal salary and benefit costs in your calculation for percentage of operating budget. Be aware that many departments have 90%+ going to personnel costs.
- Narratives
 - Does your department have any rainy day funds, rainy day reserves, or emergency funds? If yes, what is the total amount currently set aside? What are the funds earmarked for? (1,000 characters)
 - It is acceptable to have reserve funding, but provide details on whether these funds are restricted to certain projects (i.e. station construction, apparatus purchase, etc.)
 - Explain current state of apparatus, stations, etc. if you are setting aside reserve funding. Is your fleet averaging 20 years old and in dire need of replacement? Are fire stations outdated and incompatible with the current fire department mission?

Department Call Volume

- Data Section
 - Be aware that FEMA requires you to input call data in NFIRS format. You can use the NFIRS website to get your departments data if you do not have it in your dispatch system.

Request Details Section

- You must answer whether you are applying for any waiver(s) which can be issued for:
 - Supplanting - Grant funds may not be used to supplant funds that would otherwise be available from State or local sources, or the Bureau of Indian Affairs
 - Cost Share – Local jurisdiction is required to provide 25% of funding in years 1 and 2, and 65% in year 3.
 - Minimum budget - At the time of application, the applicant's budget for fire related programs and emergency response must not be below 80 percent of the applicant's average funding level in the 3 years prior to November 24, 2003
- Data Section
 - The questions under the NFPA 1710/1720 chart are critical to your grant score.
 - For combination departments, keep in mind that achieving 100% compliance with NFPA 1720, versus 50% for NFPA 1710, will result in a higher score.
 - Those departments showing the largest movement on questions #2/2A and

#3/3A are awarded the highest point value. Keep this in mind when deciding where to place SAFER personnel.

- Creating a new rescue unit staffed with 2 personnel will not provide the same amount of points as placing those personnel on engines to increase staffing from 3 to 4 personnel.
 - You can deploy the personnel wherever you want after the 3 year SAFER grant expires.
 - You should answer “Yes” to every question on this page to ensure maximum points value. If you do not have a formal policy for any of these items, have the Chief and Union President draft a MOU or other document in the interim so that you can answer truthfully.

- Narratives
 - Please describe the departments hiring practices and timelines including how long after award will you be able to start a recruit class and how many recruits can be trained in one class. If you are requesting more positions than can be trained in one recruit class, please discuss when you will be able to hold the second class. If your department will need governing body approval before the award can be accepted, please be sure to include details on the timeline needed for acceptance. (2,000 characters)
 - It is best if you have approval from elected officials and governing bodies before you submit the grant (include details in your narratives under the sustainment section).
 - A default 180-day recruitment period begins when an application is approved for award under this category.
 - The 36 month period of performance automatically starts after the 180-day recruitment period, regardless of whether the grantee has successfully hired the requested firefighters.
 - If a recipient is able to rehire or hire SAFER-funded firefighters during the 180-day recruitment period, the period of performance may begin at that time. For recipients awarded retention positions, the period of performance can begin immediately. However, in both cases, recipients must submit an amendment requesting that the period of performance start before the end of the 180-day recruitment period.

 - Is your request for hiring firefighters based on a risk analysis and/or a staffing needs analysis? If yes, describe how the analysis was conducted. (1,000 characters)
 - In order to score competitively, you must answer “Yes” to this question and provide further detail. Many departments have this in the form of your strategic planning documents, a staffing needs analysis, ISO document, or accreditation study. If you do not, we suggest that you have a formal sit down meeting to specifically discuss your staffing and needs analysis. You will also expand on the information provided here in the narrative section.
 - Include information along the lines of “The joint labor/management task force identified...”

- If awarded a grant, will you provide the new recruits with entry-level physicals in accordance with NFPA 1582, Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments 2003 Edition, Chapter 6? (1,000 characters)
 - It is best if you can answer with their 1582 compliant physicals or to 1582 compliance. If you answer no you will lose points.
 - Same with the following question on annual physicals.
- Will the personnel hired meet the minimum local or State EMS training and certification requirements, as designated by your agency? (1,000 characters)
 - Again, best if you can answer yes or does not apply.
- Does your department currently have a policy in place to recruit and hire veterans?
 - If you do not have one, we suggest trying to implement a policy that provides some sort of incentive to hire veterans. (1,000 characters)
- Is it your department's intent to sustain the positions filled under this grant after the completion of the period of performance? If yes, please provide a brief description on how the positions will be sustained. (1,000 characters)
 - What does the future look like? Are revenues likely to increase or decrease and why?
 - FEMA, and peer reviewers, want to see commitment from your jurisdiction and officials to maintain these positions beyond the 3 year period of performance. If you have identified a source of funding please provide some details. If you have not secured a funding stream, provide some details with the options you are evaluating (levy increase, utility bill surcharge, etc.). The key here is for the funding stream to be equal to or greater than the annual cost of the SAFER funded positions by the time the grant expires.
- What are the standard benefits your department provides to employees? How were the costs requested above determined? (2,000 characters)
- As you are aware, grants awarded under the Hiring of Firefighters Category requires grantees to maintain their staffing levels and incur no lay-offs during the period of performance of the grant. Therefore, it is imperative that your department have the support of your governing body.
 - 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.
 - If you have received the letter, you may attach it within the application in this section. (Note: only .doc and .pdf files will be accepted).
 - If you do not have the letter at this time, you may submit a signed copy of the letter as soon as you are able via fax to 202-786-9938 or

via e-mail to firegrants@fema.dhs.gov.

- 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

Main Narratives Guidance

*One point that applies to all of the following narratives is the use of superlatives and adjectives to describe a department's call volume or situation. Anytime you find yourself stating "more than," "less than," "steadily increasing," or any words that describe increases or decreases, make sure you support your claim with concrete data and statistics. Everyone applying for these grants is "doing more with less." Stick to relevant data that is 3-5 years old.

Remember that these are your peer fire fighters that review the grants, you do not need to spell out every aspect of operations and NFPA standards to them. Simply state "with 4 personnel we would comply with NFPA 1710 initial staffing recommendations" as opposed to "with 4 personnel we would comply with NFPA 1710, the Standard for the Deployment of Career Fire Fighters, recommendations for first arriving fire suppression apparatus Section 5.2.2.2(2)."

The following are the narrative headings you are required to answer:

- **Element #1 Project Description (30%)**
 - 1a. Why does the department need the positions requested in this application? (3,000 characters)
 - Consider opening this section with "The XYZ Fire Department is requesting \$XXX,XXX to (prevent layoff, hire for attrited positions, or new hires) XX positions so that we can (move towards, become) compliant with NFPA (1710/1720)."
 - One paragraph summary of your deployment, population, pertinent call volume and economic conditions.
 - One paragraph about why you need the positions. For example "XYZFD was unable to replace firefighter positions vacated through attrition during 2013-2014. This ultimately forced XYZFD to permanently remove a 4th unit (aerial ladder company) from service in 2015. Since FY 2013, XYZFD has experienced an overall budget reduction of 15%, while experiencing a 5% increase in operational costs over the same years. To meet NFPA and OSHA requirements for fire and emergency response, we are requesting assistance to hire (12) firefighters to permit us to re-staff an aerial ladder company to ensure NFPA 1710 Staffing Requirements for Initial Arriving Company and Initial Full Alarm Assignment Capability. Staffing three engines, an aerial ladder company, and a command vehicle will ensure compliance with NFPA 1710. Currently, the ladder company is dispatched 2nd to neighboring automatic aid partners'. If available, firefighters from one of the engine companies will respond."
 - 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))? (2,000 characters)
 - Be very clear where the SAFER positions will be placed.
 - If you have a browned out or closed station, provide statistics for how often the station will be open with these personnel.

- If the SAFER personnel will also be able to stand up an additional service (medic, hazmat, etc.) provide some details.
 - Provide concrete specific details, for example:
 - *We could open up a third engine company on the west side of town, an area currently underserved by the nearest station. Current response time to the 125 fire and 300 EMS incidents in this area average over 7 minutes. With the new station, response times would average under 4 minutes.*
- 1c. What are the specific benefits the positions requested in this application will provide to the department and community? (1,000 characters)
 - If you have had a browned out or closed station, provide statistics for how many incidents that station runs.
 - Have response times in that area, or in general, increased?
 - Include reference to NIST or other staffing study statistics
- 1d. Please describe how the awarding of this grant would enhance the department's ability to protect the critical infrastructure discussed in the Applicant Characteristics section of the application. (1,000 characters)
 - Make sure you provide direct linkage back to the structures you listed and provide specific operation details. For example, due to overtime costs, we removed 2 fire fighters from a station in our high rise district. Without sufficient staffing we now cross-staff the engine and ladder at this station. The engine runs 1,500 incidents a year and is often unavailable to respond the ladder truck. On multiple occasions, including two working fires, the second due ladder responded to this district. The average response time for the second due ladder is 10 minutes compared with 4 minutes for the closer station.
- **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? How will that risk be reduced if awarded the positions requested in this application? (2,000 characters)
 - What can't you do now that you could do before the personnel reductions/layoffs/attritions, or, if you are applying for new hires, what can't you do now that you could do with additional personnel?
 - Reiterate what you stated in the risk analysis question in the data section of the grant application.
 - What types of incidents are you responding to most often?
 - What types of incidents have proven to be problematic? What is your typical turnout?
 - Remember, the most important thing is for you to tell your story and why this funding is critical to your members and the community you protect.
 - Do you have high hazard buildings or occupancies? What does NFPA say about staffing for these responses?

- 2b. What impact will the positions requested in this application have on the departments NFPA compliance, if awarded? (2,000 characters)
 - Discuss both 4-minute/4 personnel first unit and 8-minute/15 personnel full alarm statistics
 - Discuss EMS priority incidents and response times
 - Do you only dispatch a single engine for most responses?
 - Do you staff with less than 4 fire fighters currently? If you would staff with 4 fire fighters after the grant you would then be 100% compliant.
 - If your CAD system is capable of determining how many times you arrive at structural response with 15 personnel provide that information.
 - If you can make a good estimate of how often you would assemble 15 personnel within 8-minutes at full alarms you can provide that detail.
 - For more complex jurisdictions, you may need to complete a Geographic Information Systems computer modeling assessment. Contact the grants department staff for additional information.

- **Element #3 - Financial Need (30%):**
 - 3a. Please provide additional details on the departments operating budget. This should include an income verse expenses breakdown of the annual budget indicated in Applicant Characteristics section of the application. (2,000 characters)
 - Describe operating budget limitations
 - List primary sources of revenue, average annual operating budget over the last several years, how much is dedicated to personnel costs etc.
 - Break out your 10-15 major/largest line items for reviewers, and provide both \$ and % for each line item. You may need to combine some line items. For example:
 - 90% (\$1,000,000) Personnel salary and benefits
 - 3% (\$50,000) Fuel
 - 2% (\$20,000) Supplies

 - 3b. Please describe the department's budget shortfalls and the inability to address the financial needs without federal assistance. What other actions have you taken to obtain funding elsewhere (i.e., state assistance programs, other grant programs, etc.)? (2,000 characters)
 - Provide brief overview of financial challenges of the jurisdiction
 - Have State shared revenues decreased?
 - Property taxes reduced?
 - Have other departments (police, public works, schools) been adversely affected?
 - Cuts to budgets, personnel, programs?
 - Be sure to list reductions in both real dollars and overall percentages
 - Makes it easy for reviewers from larger metro departments to evaluate your reductions. \$1M may not be sizable to a larger

department, but if it's 20% of your budget the reviewers will put that in perspective.

- What are your funding challenges?
 - Due to legislation are you maxed out on collections?
- Provide attempts to acquire funding from other sources
 - Did you already request additional funding from elected officials?
 - Have you partnered with other departments to purchase large items? Reduced administrative staff? Joined in collective response agreements? Negotiated give backs from the contract?
- 3c. How are the critical functions of your department affected without this funding? (2,000 characters)
 - Economic times, explain budget cuts, staffing reductions etc.
 - What are the consequences for not receiving the award?
 - How do you compare in terms of number of fire fighters and call volume versus your peer departments?
 - When will you be able to provide this critical staffing if you do not receive an award?
 - Reiterate how you plan to sustain the positions beyond the SAFER grant period.
- **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. (3,000 characters)
 - Number of fire fighters who will be affected in your department as well as mutual and auto aid departments
 - Number of residents who will be better protected
 - Relevant call data
 - Working fires and critical EMS runs
 - Include mutual/auto aid areas if your call volume supports your involvement in outlying areas
 - Will you collect data and evaluations that demonstrate the effectiveness of your training and how will you collect that information?
 - Do you need to modify your CAD system to maintain accurate "people count" and markups at working fire incidents?
 - What type of real world data will you gather?
 - How will you present this to elected officials who may be wary of adding staffing in a difficult economic environment?

- **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)
 - We suggest a simple “thank you for reviewing our application, we appreciate your efforts on behalf of the fire service.” At this point, reviewers have already made their decision and unless you have something very important that could not fit in the other sections, you should have answered all their questions in the prior sections.

Supplemental Information

- Please see [this document](#) for the additional information that is required by FEMA. Note this section is at the very end of the application.
 - ***Note when entering data and years in the questions below, you must have the latest date (i.e. 2016/2015) in the very first/top data field as shown in #1 below.
 - The purpose of this page is to gather information on the economic condition of fire departments applying for these grants. These responses will assist the SAFER Program with establishing an economic hardship waiver for future years of this program. By providing the information to the questions below, we will better understand what data is available and serves as useful indicators of a departments economic stability. We strongly encourage you submit as much information as possible. If you are unable to supply the information for any of the questions, please indicate as appropriate. Any missing information may require additional follow up if your application is under consideration for award.