



# Lumpkin County, Georgia

## Finance Department

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**Date:** February 23, 2016

**Agenda Item:** Funding Opportunity  
US Department of Homeland Security  
FEMA – Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFG)  
FY-2015 Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER)  
Emergency Services - Personnel

**Facts & Historical Information:**

The purpose of the SAFER grant program is to provide funding directly to fire departments to assist them in increasing the number of firefighters to help communities provide adequate protection from fire and fire-related hazards. To achieve this purpose, SAFER is a competitive/discretionary grant program comprised of two categories: Hiring of Firefighters and Recruitment & Retention of Volunteer Firefighters.

The goal of the Hiring of Firefighters category is to improve or restore staffing levels to ensure fire departments have adequate personnel to respond and safely perform at incident scenes. This category provides two-year grants to assist fire departments by paying the salaries and benefits of the SAFER-funded positions. However, other expenses for items such as training, equipment, uniforms, and physicals are not eligible to be paid with grant funds.

A total of \$340,000,000.00 has been appropriated for the FY-2015 SAFER grant program. There are no annual salary limits, and there are no cost-sharing (matching) requirements for grants made under the FY-2015 appropriations. Program funds are not renewable and funding is only available to grant recipients during the period of performance associated with the grant award. Awarded recipients will have no obligation to retain the SAFER-funded positions after the conclusion of the two year period of performance.

**Potential Courses of Action:**

- A. Prepare and submit a FY-2015 SAFER grant application to fund twelve full-time firefighter positions.
- B. Take no action.

**Budget Impact:** There will be no impact to the County's operating budget resulting from the submission of a FY-2015 SAFER grant program application. However, should the County's application be funded, there will be an impact to the County's operating budget.

**Staff**

**Recommendation:** Please see statement form David Wimpy, Director of Emergency Services.



## Lumpkin County Emergency Services

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Dahlonega Ga. 30533

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*David Wimpy*

EMA Director / Fire Chief / EMS Director

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February 24, 2016

Board of Commissioners  
99 Courthouse Hill  
Dahlonega, GA 30533

RE: AFG (Safer)

BOC,

The Lumpkin County Emergency Services has an opportunity to possibly receive a grant that will help fund some much needed personnel. This is a great opportunity, but we need your approval and support to continue with the process. This grant will cover the full salaries of each Firefighter that will be hired under this process for two full years. This will be a huge step forward for not only the department, but the overall safety and protection of everyone that lives and visits Lumpkin County. Thank you for your continued support.

With Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Wimpy".

David Wimpy,  
LCES Director



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[www.lumpkincounty.gov](http://www.lumpkincounty.gov)

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# Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFG)



## FY 2015 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER)

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

#### What is the purpose of SAFER?

The purpose of SAFER Grants is to provide funding directly to fire departments and national, state, local, or tribal organizations representing the interests of volunteer firefighters to assist them in increasing the number of firefighters to help communities meet industry minimum standards and 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, SAFER is a competitive/discretionary grant program comprised of two categories:

- 1. Hiring of Firefighters** Grants provide financial assistance to help fire departments rehire firefighters who have been laid off, retain firefighters facing imminent layoffs, fill positions that were vacated through attrition, or hire new firefighters. The goal is to assist departments to improve or restore staffing levels to ensure they have adequate personnel to respond and safely perform at incident scenes, providing protection from fire and fire-related hazards in their communities. **This category provides two-year grants to assist fire departments by paying the salaries and benefits of the SAFER-funded positions.**
- 2. Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters** Grants assist fire departments and national, state, local, or tribal organizations with the recruitment and/or retention of volunteer firefighters. The goal 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 Grants can have a period of performance of up to four years.**

#### How much funding is available for the FY 2015 SAFER Grant Program?

A total of \$340,000,000 has been appropriated for the FY 2015 SAFER Grants.

The appropriated funds are to be administered as indicated below as the result of a recommendation via the Criteria Development Panel (CDP) or as required by *Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974, as amended*:

- 10 percent is set aside for the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters (15 USC § 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 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 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 USC § 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 USC § 2229a(a)(1)(H))

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

There are no annual salary limits, and there are no cost-sharing requirements for grant awards made under the FY 2015 appropriations.

### **Can a department apply for both SAFER Grant categories - Hiring of Firefighters and Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters?**

Yes. However, departments interested in applying for both a Hiring Grant and a Recruitment and Retention Grant must submit **two separate applications, one for each category**. Each application will require its own unique narrative statement.

### **Are SAFER Grants “renewable” after the period of performance?**

No. SAFER is a competitive/discretionary grant program. Program funds are 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 award.

### **Is an extension to the SAFER period of performance allowable?**

Extensions to the period of performance may be granted when, due to circumstances beyond the control of the grant recipient, activities associated with the award cannot be completed within the stated performance period. Extensions are not guaranteed and are not automatically approved.

Extensions will only be considered through formal requests, via the eGrants system, and must contain specific and compelling justifications as to why an extension is required.

## **Hiring of Firefighters**

### **Who is eligible to apply for funding in the Hiring category?**

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

### **What are eligible expenses in the Hiring category?**

The only allowable costs under the Hiring of Firefighters category are salary and associated benefits (actual payroll expenses). SAFER Funding will pay for the total salary and benefit costs for each funded position.

### **What are some ineligible expenses in the Hiring category?**

- Pre-application costs, such as grant writer fees, administrative costs, and indirect costs associated with hiring or rehiring of firefighters
- Costs to train and equip firefighters (however, the salaries and benefits of firefighters hired under the SAFER Grants funding while engaged in training are eligible if the firefighter is employed by the department)
- Uniforms and physicals
- Overtime costs (except overtime costs routinely paid as a part of the base salary or the firefighter's regularly scheduled and contracted shift hours in order to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act [FLSA])
- Salaries and benefits of firefighters who are current employees or were hired prior to the award date (except under the retention activity)
- Costs to fund promotions (e.g., pay a current member a higher salary by placing them in a new SAFER-funded position)

### **What is the Period of Performance under the Hiring category?**

The FY 2015 SAFER Period of Performance for the Hiring of Firefighters category is two years.

### **Are firefighters hired prior to an offer of award eligible under the Hiring category?**

No. Firefighters hired and/or rehired prior to an offer of award are not eligible under the hiring category. The only exception is those positions funded under the retention activity.

### **How does SAFER define the “date of an award offer?” Is this the first day of the period of performance?**

The SAFER Program defines the “date of an award offer” as the date that the award notification letter is sent to the applicant in the eGrants system.

### **If a SAFER-funded retention position becomes vacant, may the department fill that position with an employee who was hired prior to the offer of award?**

No. If a SAFER-funded retention position becomes vacant after an offer of award, that position must be filled with a new hire – i.e., a person hired after the offer of award. This applies to all categories of SAFER Awards – new hires, rehires, attrition, and retention.

### **What are the requirements for the matching funds in the Hiring of Firefighters category?**

There are no matching funds requirements for hiring grants.

### **Does a department have to retain the SAFER-funded positions after the grant concludes?**

No. Awarded recipients have no obligation to retain the SAFER-funded positions after the conclusion of the period of performance for FY 2015 SAFER Awards.

### **What type of firefighter positions will be funded?**

Only full-time firefighter positions will be funded. Full-time positions are those funded for at least 2,080 hours per year (e.g., 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year).

As the goal of SAFER Grants is to enhance incident scene safety, all applicants must certify that the primary assignment (more than 50 percent of duties) of all SAFER-funded positions will be an operational assignment (fire suppression, including staffing a 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.

The grant program will consider funding job-share positions if sufficient justification is provided.

### **What is a job-share position?**

A job-share position is a full-time position occupied by more than one person. For FY 2015, there is no cap on the number of employees who may share a single job-share position.

### **Can a department apply for job-share positions if it has never previously utilized job-share employees?**

For applicants who are applying under the rehire, retention, and/or attrition subcategories, if the position was not job-shared when the position was vacated, then you will not be eligible to job-share the position if awarded. New job-sharing positions are only eligible for applicants applying under the new hire activity.

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

The SAFER Program considers six months to be a reasonable time to fill an operational position that becomes vacant during the period of performance. Departments must demonstrate that they are taking active and timely steps to fill any operational positions vacated during the grant period of performance.

### **How much time does a department have to hire the SAFER-funded positions?**

For all grant recipients awarded under the Hiring of Firefighters category, a default 180-day recruitment period begins when the application is approved for award.

The two year period of performance automatically starts after the 180-day recruitment period, regardless of whether the grant recipient has successfully hired or rehired the awarded positions.

If a grant recipient is able to rehire or hire their SAFER-funded firefighters during the 180-day recruitment period, the period of performance may begin at that time. For grant recipients awarded under the Retention activity, the period of performance can begin immediately. However, in both cases, grant recipients must submit an amendment requesting that the period of performance start before the end of the 180-day recruitment period.

### **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 cannot be delayed or started later than 180 days after the recruitment period.

### **Can grant recipients submit a payment request for pre-award expenditures?**

Pre-award expenditures are not reimbursable in the Hiring category. Only costs incurred during the grant period of performance are allowable. **Firefighters hired prior to the date of award are not eligible for SAFER Funding unless the award is for the retention of firefighters.**

**The 2015 SAFER Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) states that grant recipients cannot layoff any firefighters during the period of performance. If the department loses positions to retirement or other attrition, must it fill those vacancies?**

Yes. During the grant period of performance, recipients of the FY 2015 SAFER Hiring Grant are required to maintain their staffing at the level that existed on the date of the award offer, in addition to the SAFER-funded positions.

Once awarded, grant recipients under the Hiring of Firefighters category must submit a current (pre-SAFER) roster listing paid operational/firefighting personnel in support of NFPA 1710 or NFPA 1720, who are in full-time or job share positions on the date of the award offer. The program office will work with a grant recipient to establish the correct staffing maintenance number which combines the number of pre-SAFER and SAFER-funded positions. Once this is established, grant recipients must agree to maintain this number throughout the grant period of performance by taking active and timely steps to fill any vacancies.

Grant recipients who are unable to fill firefighting positions (due to documentable economic hardship) that are vacated through attrition (e.g., resignation, retirement) may petition FEMA for a waiver of staffing maintenance requirements. An approved waiver allows a grant recipient to decrease and reestablish the staffing maintenance number agreed to at the time of award by the number of positions that a grant recipient is unable to fill. In order 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 this level of staffing risk losing the federal funds awarded under this grant.**

**Do departments need to provide a copy of the layoff notice if they want to rehire or retain firefighters? How can an applicant attach this documentation to the online application?**

Yes. Copies of the official, dated, signed and issued layoff notices that correspond to the positions being requested must be attached to the Hiring Grant application for applicants who request funds to rehire firefighters who were laid off and/or to retain firefighters at risk of layoff. When you select the Rehire and/or Retention option in the Request Details section of the application, an option will appear that directs you to attach an electronic copy of the layoff notice. The layoff notices may be in either a PDF or a Microsoft Word document. You may attach multiple documents if needed (Note: only .doc and .pdf files will be accepted).

**What is the difference between the layoff notices that need to be submitted under the rehiring activity and those under the retention activity?**

- **Rehiring** - Requests for grants to rehire laid-off firefighters are limited to requesting the number of firefighter positions **already lost** due to layoffs enacted within the two years prior to the start of the application (between February 22, 2014 and February 22, 2016).
- **Retention** - Requests for grants to retain firefighters who face imminent layoff are limited to those firefighters who **have been issued a formal layoff notice, prior to the start of the application period (February 22, 2016)**, that specifies a date for the layoff action that is within 120 days of the close of the application period (March 25, 2016); the layoff's must become effective on or before July 23, 2016.

**A department hired firefighters with a contract that will be expiring soon. The firefighters will not be laid off, but their contracts will be terminated. Can the fire department apply for an FY 2015 SAFER Grant to keep them employed?**

Yes, in this case the fire department may apply for a grant to retain the firefighters; however, you must contact the Program Office to discuss the documentation that must be included for your unique situation.

**Will there be an option for third-year veteran's funding in the FY 2015 SAFER Hiring grant program?**

No, there is no option for third-year veteran's funding in the FY 2015 SAFER Program.

## **Recruitment and Retention (R&R) of Volunteer Firefighters**

**Who is eligible to apply for funding in the R&R category?**

Combination fire departments, volunteer fire departments, and national, state, local, or tribal organizations that represent the interests of volunteer firefighters may apply for funding in the Recruitment and Retention category. Career fire departments are ineligible to apply for funding in this category.

**What are examples of eligible costs under the R&R category?**

Applicants must correlate the activities for which funding is being requested and the identified recruitment or retention problems or issues being addressed. Additionally, FEMA will not fund activities if an applicant has not provided sufficient information detailing how an activity being funded will enhance recruitment and retention.

For specific examples of eligible costs, please refer to Appendix B – Programmatic Information and Priorities in FY 2015 SAFER NOFO.

**What are some ineligible expenses in the R&R category?**

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

- Salary and benefits for firefighters
- Fire suppression equipment or vehicles
- Fire simulators, fire evolution, or fire training props (e.g., burn trailers, forcible entry, rescue/smoke maze, flashover simulator, etc.)
- Cash payments (including gift cards) or award programs for non-operational activities
- Costs for training currently covered under the department's operating budget, such as tuition or instructor fees for department-mandated, basic-level training
- "Giveaways," such as pencils, pens, t-shirts, cups, mugs, or balloons for recruitment events

For the full list of ineligible costs, please refer Appendix B – Programmatic Information and Priorities in the FY 2015 SAFER NOFO.

**How is "new recruit" defined according to the SAFER Program?**

SAFER defines a "new recruit" to be a volunteer firefighter who joins the department after the date of the award offer.

### **Is communications equipment eligible under FY 2015 SAFER?**

No. All communications equipment including cell phones, pagers, portable radios, or Computer-Aided Dispatch systems are ineligible under FY 2015 SAFER.

### **Can Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) be purchased under the R&R category? What are the requirements?**

Yes. OSHA-required and NFPA-compliant PPE is eligible only 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 2015 SAFER NOFO for additional details on eligible PPE expenditures and requirements.

### **What activities are allowable under the R&R category for new recruits only?**

PPE, station duty uniforms, and physicals are only eligible for new recruits.

### **What types of tuition reimbursement are ineligible?**

The FY 2015 SAFER Grant does not limit the type of tuition reimbursement one can apply for, and it does not have to be related to fire science or related fields.

### **Do Recruitment and Retention grant 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.

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

Generally, except for grant writer fees, pre-award expenditures are not reimbursable in the Recruitment and Retention category. Only costs incurred during the grant period of performance are allowable.

See the Pre-award Cost section in the FY 2015 NOFO for the specific requirements pertaining pre-award costs

### **Is there a matching funds requirement for the R&R category?**

No. There is no matching funds requirement for this category and no maximum federal share limit.

### **Are administrative or indirect costs eligible?**

Administrative or indirect costs are allowable but are limited to a **combined total** of three percent of the total awarded amount, unless a grant recipient has a previously negotiated and approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement.

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 can be found at <http://rates.psc.gov/>.)

Prior to submitting any claims for reimbursement of indirect costs, applicants must first submit a copy of their negotiated and approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement to FEMA for review and approval. The indirect cost rate is applicable as long as it is consistent with the established terms of the agreement.

### **What is a “nominal stipend?”**

Nominal stipends are eligible for firefighters where the 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. 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 they pay a full time firefighter who performs similar services 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 paid exceeds 20 percent of the prevailing wage, then the firefighter receiving compensation would not qualify as a volunteer and is considered an employee who may be covered by the FLSA minimum wage and overtime provisions. Therefore they would not be eligible to receive a stipend under the grant.

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

Paid-on-call firefighters 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 nominal. 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 for purposes of this SAFER 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 for the purposes of this SAFER Program.

## **Eligibility**

### **Who is eligible for SAFER Funding?**

Eligible departments or organizations are limited to one application for Recruitment and Retention and/or one application for Hiring per application period. Your organization type determines your eligibility for SAFER application categories.

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

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

No. Career fire departments are not eligible for funds in the Recruitment and Retention category. They are only eligible for funding in the Hiring of Firefighters category.

**I represent a volunteer firefighter interest organization that received a Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) Grant. Are we eligible for a SAFER Grant also?**

Yes. National, state, local, or 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 category regardless of whether they received a FP&S Grant. However, these organizations are not eligible for funding in the Hiring of Firefighters Category.

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

Yes. While the SAFER Grants and the Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) are administered by the same office, there are no restrictions with respect to having concurrent awards.

**Is an independent rescue squad or emergency medical services unit eligible for SAFER Funding?**

No. Independent rescue squads or emergency medical services unit are not eligible for SAFER Funding. Only fire departments and national, state, local, or tribal volunteer firefighter interest organizations are eligible for SAFER Grants.

If my department was awarded a prior-year SAFER Grant that still has an active performance period, is it eligible to apply for a SAFER Grant this year?

Yes. Applicants are eligible to receive more than one SAFER Award. Applicants wishing to apply for additional grants are subject to the same guidelines and requirements as discussed in the FY 2015 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 for the same members as the currently awarded SAFER Grant.

**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 majority volunteer if more than 50 percent of its membership is made up 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/or 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 paid-on-call firefighters is considered a combination fire department for the purposes of this program.

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

These are defined as organizations that support or represent the interests of firefighters in front of legislative bodies at the local, state, 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 an applicant is an appropriate volunteer firefighter interest group.

### **The SAFER Grants prohibit “for-profit” organizations from applying for grant funding. How do I determine if my department is for-profit?**

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 NOT a for-profit organization and are therefore eligible to receive SAFER Funding.

## **Completing the Application**

### **When can I apply?**

Applications will be accepted only from 8:00 a.m. **Monday, February 22, 2016** until 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST) on **Friday, March 25, 2016**.

### **When is the grant application due?**

The application deadline is **March 25, 2016**. Applications must be received by 5:00 p.m. EST. Applications received after the close of the application period will not be accepted.

### **How do I access the FY 2015 SAFER eGrant application?**

Applications under the FY 2015 SAFER will only be accessible at <https://portal.fema.gov>. The application will also be linked via 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 2015 SAFER Grant using a paper application process?**

No. All FY 2015 SAFER applications must be completed online through the eGrants system.

## Regional Applications

### Who may apply for a regional grant?

Eligible volunteer and combination fire departments may apply for regional grants in the Recruitment and Retention Category if their request will have an impact beyond the immediate boundaries of the applicant's first-due area. An eligible applicant will serve as the "host applicant" and apply on behalf of the other fire departments benefitting from the grant.

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

### I'm planning to submit an application as the host department for a regional project. How do I answer the questions in the Applicant Characteristics sections of the online application?

When completing the Request Details and Narrative Statement sections of the application, the applicant must include a list of participating third-party organizations that will benefit if awarded. In completing the Applicant Characteristics sections of the application, the regional applicant must include data that approximates the 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 on one application.

A regional host must include a list of all the participating organizations 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 the 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, prior to submitting an application under the Regional Program activities.

## Technical Assistance for Applicants

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

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

Normal business hours for the Help Desk are Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Eastern Time. During the application period, **February 22, 2016 - March 25, 2016**, the Help Desk will be staffed between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday; and until 5:00 p.m. EST on **March 25, 2016**. 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. In addition, questions may be faxed to (866) 274-0942 or e-mailed to [FireGrants@dhs.gov](mailto:FireGrants@dhs.gov).

## 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.

## Do I need to register in SAM.gov?

Yes. Per 2 CFR § 25.205, SAM registration is required to receive a SAFER Grant Award. SAM registration is only active for one year and must be renewed annually; therefore, please ensure that your entity has a valid and active registration in SAM.gov prior to submitting your application.

Payments and amendments are also contingent on the information provided in SAM, so it is imperative that the information in the application is correct, current, and matches the information in SAM.gov. Please ensure that your organization’s name, address, DUNS number, and EIN are up to date in SAM, and that the DUNS number used in SAM is the same one used to apply for all other FEMA awards.

Please also refer to the SAM.gov Get Ready Guide available on the AFG Website at <http://www.fema.gov/welcome-assistance-firefighters-grant-program> for additional assistance.

## National Standards for SAFER

### What standards does SAFER involve?

The industry minimum standards to be addressed by SAFER are the staffing and deployment sections of: **NFPA 1710, Section 5.2.4.2 (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 link providing information regarding these standards: [www.nfpa.org/SAFERActGrant](http://www.nfpa.org/SAFERActGrant).

### 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 equated 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 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>).

## **National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS)**

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

No. FEMA does not require FY 2015 SAFER Applicants to report to NFIRS.

## **National Incident Management System (NIMS)**

**Do fire departments that receive SAFER Grants have to comply with the requirements of the National Incident Management System (NIMS)?**

Yes. Any applicant who receives an FY 2015 SAFER Award must achieve the level of NIMS compliance required by the authority having command and control jurisdiction over the applicant's emergency service operations, prior to the end of the grant's period of performance. SAFER applicants are not required to be in compliance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS), either to apply for SAFER Funding or to receive a SAFER Award.

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

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



The Department of Homeland Security  
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

**FY2015 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER)**

**NOTE: Applicants pursuing this funding opportunity who have not obtained a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and/or are not currently registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) should take immediate action to obtain a DUNS number, if applicable, and then register immediately in SAM. It may take four weeks or more after SAM registration submittal before the registration is active in SAM, then an additional 24 hours for Grants.gov to recognize the information. Information on obtaining a DUNS number and registering in SAM is available from Grants.gov at <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>**

**A. Program Description**

**Issued By**

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Grant Programs Directorate (GPD)

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number**

97.083

**CFDA Title**

Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER)

**Notice of Funding Opportunity Title**

Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER)

**NOFO Number**

DHS-15-GPD-083-000-99

**Authorizing Authority for Program**

Section 34 of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974, (Pub. L. No. 93-498), as amended (15 U.S.C. § 2229a)

**Appropriation Authority for Program**

Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2015 (Pub. L. No. 114-4)

**Program Type**

New

**Program Overview, Objectives, and Priorities**

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Grant Programs Directorate is responsible for the implementation and administration of the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Program. The goal of the SAFER Grant Program 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.

In awarding grants, the Administrator of FEMA shall consider the following:

- The findings and recommendations of the Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP)
- The degree to which an award will reduce deaths, injuries, and property damage by reducing the risks associated with fire related and other hazards
- The extent of an applicant's need for a SAFER Grant and the need to protect the United States as a whole

SAFER intends to improve or restore local fire departments' staffing and deployment capabilities so they may more effectively and safely respond to emergencies. With enhanced or restored staffing levels, recipients should experience a reduction in response times and an increase in the number of trained personnel assembled at the incident scene.

While not required for a SAFER Grant, it is preferable that the enhanced or restored staffing levels of all SAFER recipients should ensure all first-arriving apparatus are staffed with a minimum of four qualified personnel (to meet National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1710/1720 standards) who are capable of initiating the suppression response. Ultimately, SAFER recipients should achieve more efficient responses and safer incident scenes; thereby ensuring communities have improved protection from fire and fire-related hazards.

The National Preparedness System is the instrument the nation employs to build, sustain, and deliver core capabilities in order to achieve the National Preparedness Goal (Goal) of a secure and resilient nation. Complex and far-reaching threats and hazards require a collaborative and whole community approach to national preparedness that engages individuals, families, communities, private and nonprofit sectors, faith-based organizations, and all levels of government. The guidance, programs, processes, and systems that support each component of the National Preparedness System allow for the integration of preparedness efforts that build, sustain, and deliver core capabilities and achieve the desired outcomes identified in the Goal while maintaining the civil rights of individuals.

The FY 2015 SAFER Grant plays an important role in the implementation of the National Preparedness System by supporting the building, sustainment, and delivery of core capabilities essential to achieving the Goal of a secure and resilient nation. Delivering core capabilities requires the combined effort of the whole community, rather than the exclusive effort of any single organization or level of government.

The FY 2015 SAFER Grant's allowable costs support efforts to build and sustain core capabilities across the Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery mission areas. Examples of desired outcomes for FY 2015 SAFER include building and sustaining core capabilities, such as Fire Management and Suppression, and Public Health and Medical Services.

Additional details on the National Preparedness Goal can be found at <https://www.fema.gov/national-preparedness-goal>

The SAFER Grant Program is comprised of two categories:

- **Hiring of Firefighters**
  - Including subcategories for rehiring, retention, attrition, and new hires
  - Career, combination, and volunteer fire departments are eligible to apply
- **Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters**
  - Combination fire departments; volunteer fire departments; and national, state, local, or

tribal organizations that represent the interests of volunteer firefighters are eligible to apply

## **B. Federal Award Information**

### **Award Amounts, Important Dates, and Extensions**

**Available Funding for the NOFO:** \$340,000,000

**Projected number of Awards:** 300

**Period of Performance:** 12-48 Months

Hiring Category: The period of performance will be 24 months for all grants awarded under the hiring category.

Recruitment and Retention (R&R) Category: The period of performance will be between 12 and 48 months for all grants awarded under the R&R category.

**Projected Period of Performance Start Date(s):** 6/30/2016

**Projected Period of Performance End Date(s):** 6/30/2017 – 6/30/2020

### **Extensions to the Period of Performance**

Is an extension to the Period of Performance permitted?  Yes  No

An extension to the period of performance for this program is allowed. Extensions to the period of performance may be granted when, due to circumstances beyond the control of the recipient, activities associated with the award cannot be completed within the stated performance period. For details on the requirements for requesting an extension to the period of performance, please refer to Appendix C: Award Administration Information, Section VII. Payments and Amendments, Amendments.

**Funding Instrument:** Grant

## **C. Eligibility Information**

### **Eligible Applicants**

- Volunteer fire departments and combination fire departments may apply for funding under both the Hiring of Firefighters category and the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters category. Separate applications must be completed for each category. Applicants are limited to one application per category, per application period. If an applicant submits two applications for the same category during a single application period, both applications will be disqualified.
- Career fire departments may apply for funding only under the Hiring of Firefighters category. Applicants are limited to one application per application period. If an applicant submits two applications, both applications will be disqualified.
- Municipalities and fire districts may submit applications on behalf of fire departments lacking the legal status to do so, such as those under the support of the municipality or district. The municipality or fire district may submit only one application for hiring per application period for each eligible fire department within the municipality or fire district.
- National, state, local, or tribal organizations representing the interests of volunteer firefighters

and individual fire departments (volunteer or combination) may only apply for funding under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters category. Applicants are limited to one application per application period. If an applicant submits two applications, both applications will be disqualified.

Table 1 identifies, in general, eligible entities that can apply for FY 2015 SAFER Funding within each category.

**Table 1: Eligible Entities**

Entity Category	Volunteer Fire Departments	Combination Fire Departments	Career Fire Departments	National, state, local, or tribal volunteer firefighter interest organization
Hiring of Firefighters Category	✓	✓	✓	
Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Category	✓	✓		✓

**Other Eligibility Requirements**

The following entity types are **NOT** eligible to apply under this announcement:

- Federal fire departments and fire departments under contract to the Federal Government whose sole responsibility is the suppression of fires on federal installations or lands;
- For-profit fire departments and organizations (e.g., fire departments that do not have specific nonprofit status or that are not municipally based);
- Ambulance services, emergency medical service organizations, rescue squads, auxiliaries, dive teams, and urban search and rescue teams;
- Non-federal airport or port authority fire departments whose sole responsibility is suppression of fires on the airport grounds or port facilities, unless the airport/port fire department has a formally recognized arrangement with the local jurisdiction to provide fire suppression on a first-due basis outside the confines of the airport or port facilities;
- Fire stations that are part of, controlled by, or under the day-to-day operational direction of a larger fire department or agency, or that are not otherwise independent;
- State and local agencies, such as forest service, fire marshals, emergency management offices, hospitals, and training offices;
- Career fire departments (under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters category); and
- National, state, local, or tribal organizations representing the interests of volunteer firefighters, supporting firefighter volunteerism, or otherwise having an interest in volunteer firefighters (under the Hiring of Firefighters category).

## **National Incident Management System (NIMS) Implementation**

SAFER applicants are not required to be in compliance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) to apply for SAFER Funding or to receive an SAFER Award. Any applicant who receives an FY 2015 SAFER Award must achieve the level of NIMS compliance required by the authority having command and control jurisdiction over the applicant's emergency service operations (e.g., a local government), prior to the end of the grant's period of performance.

## **Maintenance of Effort**

There are no maintenance of effort requirements for the FY 2015 SAFER Program.

## **Cost Share or Match**

SAFER recipients are not required to contribute a cost share towards the cost of hiring firefighters or recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters under this program.

## **D. Application and Submission Information**

### **Key Dates and Times**

<b>Date posted to Grants.gov:</b>	<b>02/16/2016</b>
<b>Application Start Date:</b>	02/22/2016 at 8:00 AM EST
<b>Application Submission Deadline:</b>	03/25/2016 at 5:00 PM EST
<b>Anticipated Program Office Review Dates:</b>	5/16/2016 – 5/20/2016
<b>Anticipated Funding Selection Date:</b>	06/01/2016

### **Application Submission Extension**

In general, DHS/FEMA will not review applications received after the deadline or consider them for funding. DHS/FEMA may, however, extend the application deadline on request for any applicant who can demonstrate good cause exists to justify extending the deadline. Good cause for an extension may include technical problems outside of the applicant's control that prevent submission of the application by the deadline, or other exigent or emergency circumstances. If applicants experience technical issues, they must notify the FEMA Help Desk as soon as possible.

### **Key Dates**

<b>Event</b>	<b>Suggested Deadline For Completion</b>
Obtaining DNMS Number	Four weeks before actual submission deadline (February 26, 2016)
Obtaining a valid EIN	Four weeks before actual submission deadline (February 26, 2016)
Updating SAM registration	Four weeks before actual submission date (February 26, 2016)
Application submission deadline	Friday, March 25, 2016

### **Address to Request Application Package**

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFGP) eGrants system is only accessible through the

AFGP Application Portal at <https://portal.fema.gov/>. There are several ways to get AFGP Application information:

- AFGP Website (<http://www.fema.gov/firegrants>)
- Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>)
- U.S. Fire Administration (<http://www.usfa.fema.gov>)

Hard copies of the application are not available.

In addition, the Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD) and/or Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) number available for this Notice is: (800) 462-7585.

Application tutorials and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) assist with the online grant application, and highlight lessons learned and changes for FY 2015. For more details, please visit the AFGP Website at <http://www.fema.gov/firegrants>.

**NOTE:** Do not use any browsers other than Internet Explorer (IE 6 or higher) when entering information. Do not have multiple browser tabs open when entering information, even when using Internet Explorer (IE 6 or higher). There are several known problems entering application information using non-IE browsers or having multiple browsers open, including but not limited to:

- System failure to recognize correct information
- System failure to capture and retain correct information
- System functions like “cut and paste” being disabled

The eGrants system will allow an authorized representative to log in and create a user name and password. This user name and password is specific to the authorized user and must not be shared with other personnel. If the applicant has submitted any Assistance to Firefighters Grants Program (AFGP) applications (Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG), Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER), Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S), Station Construction Grant (SCG) in a previous grant cycle, they must continue to use the same username, password, and Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number for any FY 2015 application(s).

If the applicant has forgotten the password or primary point of contact has changed, please visit <http://www.fema.gov/assistance-firefighters-grant-program-most-frequently-asked-questions> for instructions on how to update and correct the organization’s information.

Prior to submission and up to the application deadline, the online application can be saved, retrieved, or edited as required.

### **Content and Form of Application Submission**

DHS makes all funding opportunities available through Grants.gov, accessible on the Internet at <http://www.grants.gov>. If applicants experience difficulties accessing information or have any questions, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at (800) 518-4726.

### **Required Forms and Registrations**

All required forms have been incorporated into the online application submission.

### **Application Submission Receipt**

Once the application is submitted and received, the primary point of contact listed in the application will be electronically messaged within the eGrants system.

### **Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)**

DHS is participating in the Grants.gov initiative that provides the grant communities a single site to find grant funding opportunities. Before applying for a DHS Grant, applicants must have a DUNS number and must be registered in the System for Awards Management (SAM).

Instructions for obtaining a DUNS number can be found at the following Website:

<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html>

### **System for Award Management (SAM)**

Applicant registration in the System for Award Management (SAM) is free. All applicants must register with SAM in order to apply online. Step-by-step instructions for registering with SAM can be found at <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-%20%20register-with-sam.html>. Please remember that SAM registration is only active for one year and must be renewed annually.

**Please allow sufficient time before the grant application submission deadline to obtain a DUNS number and then to register in SAM. It may take four weeks or more after the applicant submits the SAM registration before the registration is active in SAM, then an additional 24 hours for Grants.gov to recognize the information.**

FEMA cannot make an award to an entity until the entity has complied with the requirements to provide a valid DUNS number and maintain an active SAM registration with current information. If the applicant is noncompliant at the time of award offer, then FEMA may determine the applicant is not qualified to receive an award, and award another applicant.

**IMPORTANT:** Please ensure that applicant organization's name, address, DUNS number, and Employer Identification Number (EIN) are up to date in SAM and that the DUNS number used in SAM is the same one used to apply for all FEMA applications. The applicant organization's name in SAM must also match the organization name provided on the applicant's SF-1199a. Future payments will be contingent on the information provided in SAM; therefore, it is imperative that the information is correct.

**Help with SAM** - SAM quick start guide for new Recipient registration and SAM video tutorial for new applicants are tools created by the General Services Administration (GSA) to assist those registering with SAM. 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.

**How to Get a Commercial and Government Entity (CAGE) Code** - To get a CAGE code, applicants must first be registered in SAM. Applicants will be assigned a CAGE code as part of the SAM validation process, and as soon as the registration is active, applicants can view the CAGE code online by logging in to the SAM account.

### **Funding Restrictions**

Federal funds made available through this program may only be used for the purpose set forth in the

award package and must be consistent with the statutory authority for the award. Award funds may not be used for matching funds for any other federal grants/cooperative agreements, lobbying, or intervention in federal regulatory or adjudicatory proceedings. In addition, federal funds may not be used to sue the Federal Government or any other government entity. Failure to adhere to the award conditions will cause the recipient to be considered in default of the grant agreement, and may require the return of all federal funds disbursed under the grant.

### **Construction or Remodeling/Renovation Costs**

Construction costs are not eligible under the SAFER Program. Construction includes major alterations to a building that changes the profile or footprint of the structure. To support eligible awarded activities, remodeling/renovations to an existing facility are limited to minor interior alterations costing less than \$10,000 and should be requested under Modification to Facilities. Some of these activities may require an Environmental and Historical Preservation (EHP) review; certain costs associated with an EHP Review are eligible for reimbursement.

### **Pre-award Costs**

Generally, recipients cannot use grant funds to pay for products and services contracted for or obligated prior to an offer of award. However, costs incurred after the application deadline, but prior to an offer of award, may be eligible for reimbursement only if the following conditions are met:

- Fees for grant writers under the Recruitment and Retention Category only may be included as pre-award expenditures. The recipient must submit a written request to FEMA to incur such pre-award costs by providing notification (containing the application number and a justification narrative) to FEMA, via email to the SAFER Help Desk at [FireGrants@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FireGrants@fema.dhs.gov). The notification to FEMA should be concurrent with their acquisition activity, and must be submitted within the eligible timeframe; and,
- The recipient must receive confirmation from FEMA that the expenses have been reviewed and FEMA has determined the costs to be justified, unavoidable, and consistent with the grant's scope of work.

### **Award Limits**

Not Applicable.

### **Management and Administration**

Management and administrative expenses should be based only on actual expenses or known contractual costs; requests that are simple percentages of the award, without supporting justification, will not be allowed or considered for reimbursement.

No more than three percent of the federal share of SAFER Funds awarded may be expended by the recipient for management and administration (M&A) purposes associated with the SAFER Award.

### **Indirect Costs (Facilities & Administration [F&A]) Costs**

Indirect costs are allowable under the Recruitment and Retention category, as described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.414. With the exception of recipients who have never received a negotiated indirect cost rate as described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f), recipients must have an approved indirect cost rate agreement with their cognizant federal agency to charge indirect costs to this award. A copy of the approved rate (a fully executed, agreement negotiated with the applicant's cognizant federal agency) is required at the time of application, and must be provided to FEMA before indirect costs are charged to the award. Copies of the indirect cost rate agreements, along with the SAFER application number, must be submitted

electronically to [FireGrants@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FireGrants@fema.dhs.gov).

Indirect costs will be evaluated as part of the application for federal funds to determine if they are allowable, reasonable, or disproportionately impact an application's cost benefit.

### **Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP)**

As a federal agency, DHS/FEMA is required to consider the effects of its actions on the environment and historic properties to ensure that all activities and programs funded by the agency, including grants-funded projects, comply with Federal EHP regulations, laws and Executive Orders as applicable. Recipients proposing projects that have the potential to impact the environment, including, but not limited to modification or renovation of existing buildings, structures and facilities, must participate in the DHS/FEMA EHP Review process. The EHP Review process involves the submission of a screening form that includes detailed project description that explains the goals and objectives of the proposed project along with supporting documentation so that DHS/FEMA may determine whether the proposed project has the potential to impact environmental resources and/or historic properties. In some cases, DHS/FEMA also is required to consult with other regulatory agencies and the public in order to complete the review process. The EHP Review process must be completed before funds are released to carry out the proposed project. DHS/FEMA will not fund projects that are initiated without the required EHP Review.

Additionally, all recipients are required to comply with FEMA EHP Policy Guidance. This EHP Policy Guidance can be found in FEMA Policy (FP) 108-023-1, [Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation Policy Guidance](#), and FP 108-24-4, [Environmental Planning and Historical Preservation Policy](#).

SAFER Projects that involve the installation of equipment not specifically excluded from a FEMA EHP Review per the GPD Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA); ground-disturbing activities; or modification/renovation of existing buildings or structures must undergo a FEMA EHP Review.

No facilities modification project can proceed, with the exception of project planning, prior to formal FEMA approval. Funds for activities that do not require an EHP Review may be requested by the recipient.

The following activities would not require the submission of the FEMA EHP Screening Form:

- Planning and development of policies or processes;
- Management, administrative, or personnel actions;
- Classroom-based training; and
- Acquisition of mobile and portable equipment (not involving installation) on or in a building.

The AFGP EHP Screening form and instructions are available at: <http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/90195>.

Complete the AFGP EHP Screening form and submit to the EHP Office at [GPDEHPInfo@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:GPDEHPInfo@fema.dhs.gov).

## **E. Application Review Information**

Prior to making a federal award, the federal awarding agency is required by 31 U.S.C. 3321 and 41 U.S.C. 2313 to review information available through any OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information. Therefore, application evaluation criteria may include the following risk-based considerations of the applicant: (1) financial stability; (2) quality of management systems and ability to meet management standards; (3) history of performance in managing federal award; (4) reports and findings from audits; and (5) ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements.

Funding priorities and criteria for evaluating SAFER applications are established by FEMA based on the recommendations from the Criteria Development Panel (CDP). Each year, FEMA convenes a panel of fire service professionals to develop funding priorities for the SAFER Grant program. The panel makes recommendations about funding priorities as well as developing criteria for awarding grants.

The nine major fire service organizations represented on the panel are:

- International Association of Fire Chiefs
- International Association of Fire Fighters
- National Volunteer Fire Council
- National Fire Protection Association
- National Association of State Fire Marshals
- International Association of Arson Investigators
- International Society of Fire Service Instructors
- North American Fire Training Directors
- Congressional Fire Service Institute

The CDP is charged with making recommendations to FEMA regarding the creation or modification of previously established funding priorities as well as developing criteria for awarding grants. The content of this NOFO reflects implementation of the CDP's recommendations with respect to the priorities, direction, and criteria for awards.

### **Review and Selection Process**

SAFER applications are reviewed through a multi-phase process. After the close of the application period and before the Panel Review Process begins, FEMA will review the applications submitted for eligibility. Additionally, all layoff notices attached will be verified by the FEMA Program Office. Finally, all applications will be electronically pre-scored and ranked. Applications are then scored competitively by (no less than three) members of the Peer Panel Review process. Applications will also be evaluated through a series of internal FEMA review processes for completeness, adherence to programmatic guidelines, technical feasibility, and anticipated effectiveness of the proposed project(s). Below is the process by which applications will be reviewed:

### **Criteria**

All complete and eligible applications are evaluated relative to SAFER Grant funding priorities. For details on the funding priorities, please refer to Appendix B: Programmatic Information and Priorities – Funding Priorities.

**i. Pre-scoring Process**

In the application, fire departments applying for SAFER Grants will be asked general questions about their organization and community, as well as questions specific to the proposed project. National, state, local, or tribal organizations that represent the interests of volunteer firefighters will be asked a number of general questions regarding their organizations and a series of activity-specific questions relative to the recruitment and retention projects they propose and the activities selected. Answers to activity-specific questions as well as information submitted throughout the application will determine an applicant's standing relative to SAFER Grant funding priorities. Applications most consistent with the SAFER Grant funding priorities score higher in the automated evaluation. Automated evaluation scores represent 50 percent of the total application score.

**ii. Peer Review Panel Process**

A panel of at least three Peer Review Panelists performs the second phase of an application's evaluation. The panel is comprised of fire service representatives recommended by the national organizations from the CDP. These panelists evaluate the application using the Narrative Statement, answers to the general questions, and answers to the activity-specific questions. Each application is evaluated on its own merits against established criteria and is not compared to other applications. The peer review evaluation score represents 50 percent of the total application score.

**iii. Technical Evaluation Process (TEP)**

The highest ranked applications will be deemed in the fundable range. Applications that are in the fundable range will undergo both a Technical Review by a Subject Matter Expert (SME) as well as a FEMA Program Office review prior to being recommended for award. The FEMA Program Office will assess the request with respect to costs, quantities, feasibility, eligibility, and recipient responsibility prior to recommending any application for award.

Once the TEP is complete, each application's cumulative score will be determined and a final ranking of applications will be created. FEMA will award grants based on this final ranking and the ability to meet statutorily required funding limitations outlined in Appendix B, V. Restrictions on Use of Award Funds.

**Narrative Evaluation Criteria**

The Narrative Statement of the application must provide specific details about the activity for which applicants are seeking funding, including budget details. The applicant must explain how the proposed activity is related to the hiring or recruitment and retention program.

In applications for Recruitment and Retention, applicants must also provide details regarding how volunteers will qualify for the incentives (who is eligible for initiatives funded under the grant and discuss any prerequisites). For example, an organization might withhold paying nominal stipends until members participate in a minimum number of operational activities.

Applicants should save their work often as the electronic application includes a time-out feature. If no-save activity is detected for a period of time, the application will time-out and all information that is not saved could be lost. Therefore, it is recommended that applicants type the Narrative Statement information offline using a word processing program, e.g., Microsoft Word®, WordPerfect® or Notepad, to avoid losing any information.

Once the Narrative Statement is complete, applicants can then cut-and-paste the text into the appropriate sections within the Narrative Statement section of the online application.

Please note the Narrative Statement blocks do not allow for formatting. Do not type the narrative using only capital letters. Additionally, do not include tables, special fonts (e.g., quotation marks, bullets), or graphs.

Space for the Narrative Statement is limited. Each element must have a minimum of 200 characters and each element will have a character limit; the limit varies based on the questions being asked. The character count is listed below. Once the Narrative Statement is saved to the online application, log-out and then log back in to the application to verify that the information was successfully saved.

Peer Review Panelists will evaluate and score each category based on the following narrative elements within each category:

**i. Hiring of Firefighters Category**

The Narrative Statement for applications requesting funding in this category must include Elements 1 through 4. Each element will be evaluated independently by a Peer Review Panelist. The relative weight of each element in the determination of the grant award is listed below.

**1) Project Description (30%):**

- a) Why does the department need the positions requested in this application? Describe when the positions were, or will be, vacated, and under what circumstances. If the request is based on a needs assessment or Insurance Services Office rating, provide details of those outcomes. (3000 character limit)
- b) Describe how the positions requested in this application will be used within the department (e.g., fourth on engine, open a new station, eliminate browned out stations, reduce overtime). What are the specific benefits that the positions requested in this application will provide to the fire department and community? (2000 character limit)
- c) Describe how the awarding of this grant would enhance the department's ability to protect critical infrastructure. (1000 character limit)

**2) Impact on Daily Operations (30%):**

- a) Explain how the community and the current firefighters employed by the department are at risk without the positions requested in this application. How will that risk will be reduced if awarded? (2000 character limit)
- b) Discuss the impact the positions requested in this application will have on the department's NFPA compliance. (2000 character limit)

**3) Financial Need (30%):**

- a) Provide additional details about the department's operating budget, including an income versus expenses breakdown of the annual budget. (2000 character limit)
- b) Describe the department's budget shortfalls and the inability to address the financial needs without federal assistance. What other actions has the department taken to obtain funding elsewhere (e.g., state assistance programs, other grant programs)? (2000 character limit)

- c) Discuss how the critical functions of the department are affected without this funding. (2000 character limit)
- 4) Cost Benefit (10%):**  
Describe the benefits (e.g., anticipated savings, efficiencies) the department and community will realize if awarded the positions requested in this application. (3000 character limit)
- ii. Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Category (Fire Departments)**  
The Narrative Statement for applications requesting funding in this category must include Elements 1 through 4. Each element will be evaluated independently by a Peer Review Panelist. The relative weight of each element in the determination of the grant award is listed below:
- 1) Project Description (30%):**
- a) Describe the problems and/or issues the department is experiencing in recruiting new volunteer firefighters. What are the problems and/or issues the department is experiencing in retaining current members? (3000 character limit)
  - b) Describe the implementation plan to directly address the identified problems or issues. What are the methods and specific steps that will be used to achieve this plan? (3000 character limit)
  - c) Describe how the recruitment of new volunteer firefighters and/or retention of current volunteer firefighters will impact the department's operational needs or capabilities. (1500 character limit)
  - d) Describe the specific benefits the new volunteer firefighters and/or retention of current volunteer firefighters will provide for the fire department(s) and community. (1000 character limit)
  - e) If the grant request will have a regional impact, identify the activities that are part of the regional request and explain which activities are exclusive to the host applicant, if applicable. (2000 character limit)
- 2) Impact on Daily Operations (30%):**
- a) Describe how the community and current volunteer firefighters in the department are at risk without the items or activities requested in this application. How will the risk be reduced if awarded? (2000 character limit)
  - b) Provide details on how often the department currently complies with the applicable NFPA 1710 or NFPA 1720 standards. Explain the impact the recruitment of new volunteer firefighters and/or the retention of current volunteer firefighters will have on the department's NFPA compliance, if awarded. (2000 character limit)
- 3) Financial Need (30%):**
- a) Provide additional details about the department's operating budget, including a high-level income versus expenses breakdown of the department's annual budget. (2000 character limit)
  - b) Describe the department's budget shortfalls and the inability to address financial needs without federal assistance. What other actions has the department taken to obtain funding elsewhere (e.g., state assistance programs, other grant programs)? How have similar projects have been funded in the past? (2000 character limit)

- c) Discuss how the critical functions of the department are affected without this funding. (1000 character limit)

**4) Cost Benefit (10%):**

Describe the benefits (e.g., anticipated savings, efficiencies) the department and community will realize if awarded the items or activities requested in this application. (3000 character limit)

**iii. Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity (national, state, local, or tribal volunteer firefighters interest organizations)**

The Narrative Statement for applications requesting funding in this category must include Elements 1 through 4. Each element will be evaluated independently by a Peer Review Panelist. The relative weight of each element in the determination of the grant award is listed below:

**1) Project Description (30%):**

- a) Describe the problems and/or issues the fire departments, who the organization will be reaching with this grant, are experiencing in recruiting new volunteer firefighters. What are the problems and/or issues the same departments are experiencing in retaining current members? (3000 character limit)
- b) Describe the organization's implementation plan to directly address the problems or issues identified. What are the methods and specific steps that will be used to achieve this plan? (3000 character limit)
- c) Describe how the recruitment of new volunteer firefighters and/or retention of current volunteer firefighters will impact the operational needs or capabilities of the fire departments participating in this application. (1500 character limit)
- d) Describe the specific benefits the new volunteer firefighters and/or retention of current volunteer firefighters will provide for the fire departments participating in this application and their respective communities. (1000 character limit)
- e) Describe the organization's procurement practices and the timelines outlining the chronological steps to complete the activities requested in this application. (2000 character limit)

**2) Impact on Daily Operations (30%):**

- a) Describe how the fire departments participating in this application and their current volunteer firefighters and communities are at risk without the items or activities requested in this application. How will that risk be reduced if awarded? (2000 character limit)
- b) Describe the impact that the recruitment of new volunteer firefighters and/or the retention of current volunteer firefighters will have on the NFPA compliance of the fire departments participating in this application, if awarded. (2000 character limit)

**3) Financial Need (30%):**

- a) Provide detail about the organization's operating budget, including a high-level income versus expenses breakdown of the annual budget. (2000 character limit)
- b) Describe the organization's budget shortfalls and the inability to address the financial needs without federal assistance. What other actions has the organization taken to obtain funding elsewhere (e.g., state assistance programs, other grant programs)?

- How have similar projects have been funded in the past? (2000 character limit)
- c) Discuss how the critical functions of the organization are affected without this funding. (1000 character limit)

**4) Cost Benefit (10%):**

Describe the benefits (e.g., anticipated savings, efficiencies) the fire departments participating in this application and their communities will realize if awarded the items or activities requested in this application. (3000 character limit)

**Turndown Notifications**

All applicants who do not receive an FY 2015 SAFER Award will receive a decision notification from FEMA within the eGrants system.

The notification email will briefly describe those application factors that did not adequately align to the higher FP&S Program priorities and consequently, why the application did not score high enough for further consideration. Due to the historical volume of applications and turndowns, detailed debriefs for each applicants will not be possible.

**F. Federal Award Administration Information**

**Notice of Award**

Once an award has been approved and recorded in the system, an award package is sent to the grant official authorized by the recipient. The award package and email notification will be made within the eGrants system. The authorized grant official should follow the directions in the notification to accept the award documents. The authorized grant official should carefully read the award package for instructions on administering the grant, whether there has been an adjustment to the award, and to become familiar with the terms, conditions and responsibilities of federal awards.

The offered award will remain on hold and be available (for a maximum of 30 days) until the recipient either accepts the award via the online AFGP eGrants system, or declines the award. The recipient should follow the directions in the notification to confirm acceptance of the award.

Failure to accept the grant award within 30 days of an offer of Award may result in a loss of funds. Recipients may request additional time to accept the award if needed.

**Negotiation of Award**

During the review process for a SAFER Award, the application request(s) may have been modified. These modifications will be identified in the award package, which is provided upon the offer of an award.

If the awarded activities, scope of work, or requested dollar amount(s) do not match the application as submitted, the recipient shall only be responsible for completing the activities actually funded by FEMA. The recipient is under no obligation to start, modify, or complete any activities requested but not funded by the award.

**Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

Successful applicants for all DHS/FEMA grant and cooperative agreements are required to comply with DHS Standard Administrative Terms and Conditions, which are available online at:

<http://www.dhs.gov/publication/fy15-dhs-standard-terms-and-conditions>

Before accepting the award, the authorized official should carefully read the award package. The award package contains instructions on administering the grant award, as well as terms and conditions with which the recipient must comply. Recipients must accept all the conditions in this NOFO as well as all Terms and Conditions in the Notice of Award to receive an award under this program.

## **Reporting**

Recipients are required to submit various financial and programmatic reports as a condition of their award acceptance. Future awards and funds drawdown may be withheld if these reports are delinquent.

## **Federal Financial Reporting Requirements**

### ***Federal Financial Reports (SF-425)***

Recipients of SAFER Grants awarded on or after October 1, 2009, are required to submit semi-annual Federal Financial Reports (FFR) (SF-425). The FFR is to be submitted using the online eGrants system based on the calendar year beginning with the period after the start of the period of performance. Recipients are required to submit an FFR throughout the entire period of performance of the grant. Reports are due:

- **No later than July 30** (for period January 1 – June 30)
- **No later than January 31** (for period July 1 – December 31)
- Within 90 days after the end of the Period of Performance

The Federal Financial Reporting Form (FFR) and instructions are available at the following sites:

Instructions:

[https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/grants/standard\\_forms/SF-425\\_instructions.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/grants/standard_forms/SF-425_instructions.pdf)

SF-425 (FFR) Form:

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/grants/approved\\_forms/SF-425.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/grants/approved_forms/SF-425.pdf)

### ***Financial and Compliance Audit Report***

For audits of fiscal years beginning on or after December 26, 2014, recipients that expend \$750,000 or more from all federal funding sources during their fiscal year are required to submit an organization-wide financial and compliance audit report. The audit must be performed in accordance with the requirements of the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) Government Auditing Standards, located at <http://www.gao.gov/govaud/ybk01.htm>, and the requirements of Subpart F of 2 C.F.R. Part 200, located at <http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-id?SID=876f827f6fae2c4bce610e9427a6d229&node=sp2.1.200.f&rgn=div6>.

For audits of fiscal years beginning prior to December 26, 2014, recipients that expend \$750,000 or more from all federal funding sources during their fiscal year are required to submit an organization-wide financial and compliance audit report. The audit must be performed in accordance with GAO's Government Auditing Standards, located at <http://www.gao.gov/govaud/ybk01.htm>, and OMB Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations, located at: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a133\\_compliance\\_supplement\\_2012](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a133_compliance_supplement_2012).

### ***Program Performance Reporting Requirements***

The recipients will be responsible for providing updated project(s) information on a quarterly basis. The recipient is responsible for completing and submitting a programmatic Performance Report using the eGrants system. The programmatic Performance Report is due every three months after the start of the grant's period of performance, and thereafter until the award is closed out.

### **Monitoring**

Recipients will be monitored periodically by FEMA staff, both programmatically and financially, to ensure that the project goals, objectives, performance requirements, timelines, milestone completion, budgets, and other related program criteria are being met.

Monitoring may be accomplished through either a desk-based review or onsite monitoring visits, or both. Monitoring will involve the review and analysis of the financial, programmatic, performance, compliance and administrative processes, policies, activities, and other attributes of each federal assistance award, and will identify areas where technical assistance, corrective actions, and other support may be needed.

The recipient is responsible for monitoring all sub-award activities to ensure compliance with federal and state laws, regulations, and guidance. Responsibilities include the accounting of receipts and expenditures, cash management, maintaining of adequate financial records, reporting and refunding expenditures disallowed by audits, monitoring, or other assessments and reviews.

### **Closeout**

Within 90 days after the end of the period of performance, recipients must submit a final SF-425 and a final performance report (within the closeout module in eGrants system) detailing all accomplishments and a qualitative summary of the impact of those accomplishments throughout the period of performance.

After these reports have been reviewed and approved by FEMA, a closeout notice will be completed to close out the grant. The notice will indicate the period of performance as closed, list any remaining funds that will be deobligated, and address the requirement of maintaining the grant records for three years from the date of the final SF-425.

The recipient is responsible for returning any federal funds that they have liquidated but remain unobligated by the recipient.

Information on how to return funds to FEMA is available at:

<http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/31261?id=7080>

The final SF-425 (FFR) Form will be within the closeout module but a copy can be found at

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/grants/approved\\_forms/SF-425.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/grants/approved_forms/SF-425.pdf)

## G. DHS Awarding Agency Contact

### Contact and Resource Information

#### SAFER Help Desk

The SAFER Help Desk provides technical assistance to applicants for the online completion and submission of applications into the eGrant system, answers questions concerning applicant eligibility and recipient responsibilities, and offers assistance in the programmatic administration of award. The Help Desk can be contacted at (866) 274-0960 or by email at [FireGrants@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FireGrants@fema.dhs.gov). Normal hours of operation are from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. All times listed are Eastern Time.

#### eGrants System Information

For technical assistance with the eGrants system or SAFER Application or Award questions, please email the SAFER Help Desk at: [FireGrants@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FireGrants@fema.dhs.gov), the Help Desk can also be contacted at (866) 274-0960.

#### Environmental and Historical Preservation (EHP)

- EHP Screening forms and instructions are available at <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/22789>
- SAFER recipients requiring EHP assistance should contact the GPDEHP Team at: [GPDEHPInfo@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:GPDEHPInfo@fema.dhs.gov)

## H. Additional Information

### Extensions

Extensions to the period of performance are allowed.

#### Extensions to the Grant Period of Performance

An award's period of performance must be active for a recipient to submit a proposed extension request to FEMA. Recipients should request extensions sparingly and only under exceptional circumstances.

**Approval is not guaranteed.**

Extensions to the initial period of performance identified in the award will only be considered through formal requests, via the eGrants system, and must contain specific and compelling justification as to why an extension is required.

All extension requests must contain:

1. Grant Program, Fiscal Year, and award number;
2. Justification for the extension—this must include details of the legal, policy, or operational challenges being experienced that prevent the final outlay of awarded funds by the applicable deadline;
3. Current status of the activity/activities;
4. Approved period of performance termination date and new project completion date;
5. Amount of funds drawn down to date;
6. Remaining available funds, both federal and non-federal;
7. Budget outlining how remaining federal and non-federal funds will be expended;
8. Plan for completion, including milestones and timeframes for achieving each milestone and the

- position/person responsible for implementing the plan for completion; and
9. Certification that the activity/activities will be completed within the extended period of performance without any modification to the original Statement of Work approved by FEMA.

### **Requirements for Extension Consideration**

To be eligible for consideration, extension requests must be submitted via the eGrants system. Requests should be submitted no earlier than 120 days but no later than 60 days prior to the end of the award's period of performance.

- In accordance with FEMA policy, extensions are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and typically granted for no more than a six-month time period. Extension requests will be granted only due to compelling legal, policy, or operational challenges. The review process can take up to 30 days or longer. This review period should be factored into the timing of when to submit a request for an extension.

Example: Recipients may request an extension, when not adjusting the timeline for liquidating obligations would constitute a verifiable legal breach of contract by the recipient with vendors or sub-recipients; or where a specific statute or regulation mandates an environmental review that cannot be completed within this timeframe; or where other exceptional circumstances warrant a discrete waiver.

## **Appendix A: Application Guidelines**

Appendix A contains more detailed information on SAFER Application Guidelines.

### **I. New For FY 2015**

#### **Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards**

On December 26, 2014, DHS adopted the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* in 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which establishes a uniform set of mandatory requirements for federal awards to non-federal entities. These requirements apply to all awards made after December 26, 2014, including all FY 2014 and 2015 SAFER Awards. This regulation (also commonly referred to as the "Super Circular" or "Omni Circular") is available at: [http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr200\\_main\\_02.tpl](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr200_main_02.tpl)

A crosswalk that highlights policy changes, clarifications, and updates to policy provisions, is available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/fedreg/2013/uniform-guidance-crosswalk-from-predominate-source-in-existing-guidance.pdf>

## Appendix B – Programmatic Information and Priorities

Appendix B contains more detailed information on SAFER Program Information and Priorities. Reviewing this information may help applicants make their application(s) more competitive.

### I. Supporting Definitions for this NOFO

The following definitions apply to SAFER Grants.

**Attrition:** A gradual reduction in work force without laying off of personnel, as when workers resign or retire and are not replaced.

**Automatic-aid:** An agreement whereby fire departments are dispatched simultaneously on the initial alarm or where fire departments participate in closest-unit response dispatching.

**Benefits:** Includes regular compensation paid to employees during periods of authorized absences from the job, e.g., vacation leave, sick leave, military leave. These costs are absorbed by all organization activities in proportion to the relative amount of time or effort actually devoted to each. Employer contributions or expenses for social security, employee insurance, workmen's compensation, pension plan costs, and the like, whether treated as indirect costs or as direct costs, shall be distributed to particular awards and other activities in a manner consistent with the pattern of benefits accruing to the individuals or group of employees whose salaries and wages are chargeable. Overtime expenses, other than those meeting the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requirements, are not eligible as benefits costs under the Hiring of Firefighters category.

**Career Fire Department:** A fire department that 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).

**Combination Fire Department:** A fire department that 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/or at least one active firefighter who does not receive financial compensation for services, other than life, health, and workers' compensation insurance.

**Emergency Medical Services Organization:** A public or private organization that provides direct emergency medical services, including medical transport.

**Fire Department:** An agency or organization that has a formally recognized arrangement with a state, territory, local government, or tribal authority (city, county, parish, fire district, township, town, or other governing body) to provide fire suppression on a first-due basis to a fixed geographical area. Fire departments may be comprised of members who are volunteer, career, or a combination of volunteer and career.

**Firefighter:** An individual having the legal authority and responsibility to engage in fire suppression; employed by a fire department of a municipality, county, fire district, or state, engaged in the prevention, control, and extinguishing of fires; and/or responding to emergency situations in which life, property, or the environment is at risk. This individual must be trained in fire suppression, but may also

be trained in emergency medical care, hazardous materials awareness, rescue techniques, and any other related duties provided by the fire department.

**Formal Layoff Notice:** Any layoff notice should align with the local rules and regulations that govern civil service employment in the jurisdiction. In order to be reasonable to employees, and to provide employees facing layoff actions a clear understanding of the impending action, any notice of layoff should be in writing and delivered to a specific employee affected by the action. The notice should identify a specific date employment will cease or specific event that would trigger the termination of employment. The notice should be delivered or otherwise presented directly to the affected employee in advance of the layoff action in accordance with the civil service provisions or union agreement in force in the jurisdiction taking action, e.g., 60 days prior to the effective date of the layoff action. The notice should specify whether the action is permanent or temporary, as well as provide the anticipated schedule of layoffs. For the purposes of the SAFER Program, a notice that is not executed within the specified terms will be considered void unless an additional notice is provided within 14 days of the original action date.

**Initial Full Alarm Assignment:** Personnel, equipment, and resources ordinarily dispatched upon notification of a structural fire.

**Majority Career:** A department is considered majority career if 50 percent or more of the active firefighting membership is salaried staff.

**Majority Volunteer:** A department is considered majority volunteer if more than 50 percent of the active firefighting membership is NOT compensated for service other than a nominal stipend and/or insurance.

**Mutual-aid:** An agreement whereby assisting fire departments are dispatched into another fire department's jurisdiction only when the first-arriving unit on a scene calls for assistance, or when specially requested by dispatch.

**National, State, Local, or Tribal Organizations that Represent the Interests of Volunteer Firefighters:** Organizations that support or represent the interests of firefighters in front of legislative bodies at the local, state, 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 an applicant is an appropriate volunteer firefighter interest group.

**Nominal Stipend:** 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. 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 they pay a full time firefighter who performs similar services 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, and may also utilize data from the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. A nominal stipend may also include reimbursements to volunteer firefighters for approximate out-of-pocket expenses they incur.

If a stipend paid exceeds 20 percent of the prevailing wage calculated as described above, then the firefighter receiving compensation would not qualify as a volunteer and is considered an employee who may be covered by the FLSA minimum wage and overtime provisions.

**Operational Budget:** The budget supporting fire-related programs and/or emergency response activities (e.g., salaries, maintenance, equipment, apparatus).

**Paid-on-Call:** Firefighters 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 this SAFER 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 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.

**Part-Time Firefighter:** A firefighter who works less than 40 hours per week. When more than one part-time firefighter shares a position that results in work in excess of 40 hours per week, FEMA considers that shared assignment to be a Full-time Equivalent (FTE) position that must be accounted for in the staffing information provided in the application.

**State:** Any of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

**Staffing and Deployment:** The minimum staffing requirements to ensure a sufficient number of members are available to operate safely and effectively as defined in NFPA 1710 and 1720.

**Volunteer Fire Department:** A fire department that 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 majority volunteer if more than 50 percent of its membership is made up of personnel who do not receive financial compensation for services.

## II. Application Tips

The SAFER eGrants application system is only accessible through the AFGP Application Portal at <https://portal.fema.gov/>. There are several ways to get SAFER Application information:

- AFGP Website (<http://www.fema.gov/firegrants>)
- Grants.gov (<http://www.grants.gov>)
- U.S. Fire Administration (<http://www.usfa.fema.gov>)

Application tutorials and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) help explain the current SAFER Grant Programs, assist with the online grant application, and highlight lessons learned and changes for FY 2015. For more details, please visit the AFGP Website at <http://www.fema.gov/firegrants>.

**NOTE:** Do not use any other browsers than Internet Explorer (IE 6 or higher) when entering

information. Do not have multiple browser tabs open when entering information, even when using Internet Explorer (IE 6 or higher). There are several known problems entering application information using non-IE browsers or having multiple browsers open, including but not limited to:

- system failure to recognize correct information
- system failure to capture and retain correct information
- system functions like “cut and paste” being disabled
- system resources like help screens or drop down menus being unavailable

Prior to submission and up to the application deadline, the online application can be saved, retrieved, or edited as required.

### **IMPORTANT**

Once the application is submitted, it cannot be changed. There is *no* appeal process for inaccurate or incomplete information retained by the system due to improper or multiple browser usage by the applicant.

### **NO APPLICATION WILL BE RELEASED AFTER FINAL SUBMISSION**

The primary point of contact listed in the application will automatically be notified via email, via the eGrants award management system, once the application is received.

- For the most competitive application, select those local need(s) that most closely align with the highest SAFER Program priorities.
- When filling out the online application, applicants are required to provide basic demographic information regarding their department and the community served, and applicants must provide detailed information regarding the items or activities for which they are seeking funding.
- If awarded, the application request(s) may be modified during the award review process; if the awarded activities, Scope of Work, or amount(s) don't match the application as submitted, the grantee shall only be responsible for completing the activities actually funded. The grantee is under no obligation to start, modify, or complete any activities requested but not funded by this award. Please review Award Package.

Applicant tools and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are posted at <http://www.fema.gov/firegrants>.

Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD) and/or Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS)  
The TDD/FIRS Number available for this announcement is (800) 462-7585.

The automated application is designed with help screens and drop-down lists to assist the applicant throughout the process. Applicants can save, retrieve, update and revise their work through the end of the application period; however, after an application has been completed and submitted, no changes can be made.

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

The online system will allow a single authorized representative of an eligible organization to log on and create a user name and password. The selection of the authorized representative is at the discretion of each applicant. Applicants should record their user name and password for future access to their application.

### **III. Restrictions on Use of Award Funding**

Federal funds made available through this award may only be used for the purpose set forth in this award and must be consistent with the statutory authority for the award. Award funds may not be used for matching funds for any other federal grants/cooperative agreements, lobbying, or intervention in federal regulatory or adjudicatory proceedings. In addition, federal funds may not be used to sue the Federal Government or any other government entity. Failure to adhere to the award conditions will cause the grantee to be considered in default of the grant agreement, and may require the return of all federal funds disbursed under the grant.

### **IV. Funding Priorities**

#### **Hiring of Firefighters Category**

- First priority: Rehiring laid off firefighters who were laid-off within the two years prior to the start of the application period.
- Second priority: Retention of firefighters who face imminent layoff or filling positions vacated through attrition, within the two years prior to the start of the application period, but not filled due to economic circumstances
- Third priority: Hiring new firefighters

#### **Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Category**

- The highest priority is to assist departments experiencing a high rate of turnover and with staffing levels significantly below the ideal staffing level required to comply with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards 1710 or 1720.

#### **Program Priorities Description**

This section summarizes the program priorities used to determine grant awards. Program priorities are listed as High **H**, Medium **M**, or Low **L**. Within each identified program priority, all the proposed activities have an equal value.

There are separate evaluation criteria for the following categories:

- Hiring of Firefighters category (including rehiring, retention, attrition, and new hires)
- Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters category – Fire Departments
- Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters category – National, State, Local, or Tribal Volunteer Firefighter Interest Organizations

#### **A. Hiring of Firefighters Category**

Grants awarded under the Hiring of Firefighters category enable combination and career fire departments to improve or restore staffing levels to attain a more effective level of response and a safer incident scene. Grants are awarded directly to volunteer, combination, and career fire departments to help fire departments increase their cadre of frontline firefighters. Funding under these subcategories provides fire departments with funds to pay firefighter

salaries and benefits (exclusive of overtime).

**1. Meeting the National Standards**

FEMA prioritizes bringing non-compliant (NFPA 1710 or 1720) departments back into compliance in the most cost-effective manner.

Applicants will be asked general questions about the NFPA standard they are attempting to meet as well as their current ability to meet that standard (without including the use of overtime). Applicants will also be asked to indicate what their ability will be to meet that same standard if awarded grant funds.

Having additional firefighters on staff should improve a local fire department’s ability to comply with the staffing, response, and operational standards that enhance community and firefighter safety.

Applications resulting in the largest percentage increases in compliance with the relevant section of NFPA 1710 (for career departments) or 1720 (for volunteer departments) receive higher consideration than applications resulting in smaller percentage increases in compliance.

**Note:** SAFER Grants focus only on the Deployment or Staffing and Deployment sections of these two standards, respectively.

- NFPA 1710 Assembly Requirements: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Department (Section 5.2.4.2 – Initial Full Alarm Assignment Capability)
- This standard applies primarily to all-career fire departments and combination departments if the combination department chooses it.
- NFPA 1720 Assembly Requirements: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments (Section 4.3 – Staffing and Deployment); this standard applies primarily to all-volunteer fire departments, but it may also apply to combination departments if the combination department does not choose to comply with the NFPA 1710 standard.

The tables below identify the priority levels for current and new compliance with the NFPA 1710/1720 standard.

Current 1710/1720 Compliance Priorities	
<b>H</b> Never or 0%	<b>M</b> Half the time or 40-59%
<b>H</b> Rarely or 1-19%	<b>L</b> Very often or 60-79%

Current 1710/1720 Compliance Priorities	
<b>M</b> Sometimes or 20-39%	<b>L</b> Most of the time or 80-99%

New 1710/1720 Compliance Priorities	
<b>H</b> Always or 100%	<b>M</b> Half the time or 40-59%
<b>H</b> Most of the time or 80-90%	<b>L</b> Sometimes or 20-39%
<b>M</b> Very often or 60-79%	<b>L</b> Rarely or 1-19%

**2. Call Volume and Population Served**

Department call volume and population served are both factors in the initial application evaluation. Departments responding to a higher number of incidents and departments who protect a larger jurisdiction will receive higher consideration than those departments responding to fewer incidents and protecting smaller jurisdictions.

**3. Firefighter Health Measures**

The health and wellbeing of firefighters is of paramount importance. Therefore, applicants who indicate newly recruited firefighters will undergo an entry-level physical and receive immunizations and who indicate they will provide annual medical exams receive higher consideration than applicants who do not specify these benefits will be provided. To qualify for this higher consideration, the physicals must be consistent with those required under NFPA 1582 Chapter 6, Medical Evaluations of Candidates 6.1 and Chapter 9, Essential Job Tasks — Specific Evaluation of Medical Conditions in Members.

**4. Training Requirements**

Applicants will receive higher consideration if the personnel funded under the grant will meet the minimum EMS certification requirements prescribed by the locality or state having jurisdiction.

**B. Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Category**

The purpose of these grants is to assist fire departments with the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters who are involved with or trained in the operations of firefighting and emergency response. The grants are intended to create a net increase in the number of trained, certified, and competent firefighters capable of safely responding to emergencies within the grantee’s response area. For this reason, projects that are comprehensive in nature and based on a clear needs assessment, implementation plan, and evaluation plan will receive higher consideration. The following identifies the elements that the applications will be evaluated on during the pre-scoring process.

**1. Meeting Staffing Standards**

The goal under this SAFER category is to assist departments experiencing a high rate

of turnover and that have staffing levels significantly below the ideal staffing level required to comply with NFPA standards 1710 or 1720 (for details, see section 1(c) Meeting National Standards).

Departments who currently have the lowest recruitment and retention rates are given a higher consideration for funding.

**2. Volunteer Membership**

Departments or organizations with the highest percentage of volunteers should benefit the most from the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. Therefore, applicants whose membership is comprised of mostly volunteer members, or have a significant number of volunteer firefighters, receive higher consideration.

Percentage of Volunteers	
<b>H</b> 91-100%	<b>M</b> 41-50%
<b>H</b> 81-91%	<b>M</b> 31-40%
<b>H</b> 71-80%	<b>L</b> 21-30%
<b>H</b> 61-70%	<b>L</b> 11-20%
<b>M</b> 51-60%	<b>L</b> 1-10%

**3. Recruitment/Retention Plan**

It is critical to have a plan for recruitment and/or retention activities. Applications requesting funding for recruitment and/or retention programs should be based on formal plans. Applicants must summarize the departments’ recruitment and/or retention plans in the Narrative Statement and explain how the projects/activities will fulfill the plans and meet organizational goals.

**4. Call Volume**

Department call volume is a factor in the initial evaluation. Departments responding to a higher number of incidents receive higher consideration.

**5. Firefighter Health Measures**

Applicants who indicate the newly recruited firefighters will undergo an entry-level physical and receive immunizations, who indicate they will provide annual medical exams, and who provide worker’s compensation/Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD&D) benefits to their members receive higher consideration than applicants who do not specify these benefits will be provided.

Entry-Level Medical Exams	
<b>H</b> NFPA 1582-compliant physicals	<b>M</b> Non-NFPA-compliant physicals

Annual Medical Exams	
<b>H</b> NFPA 1582-compliant physicals	<b>M</b> Non-NFPA-compliant physicals

## 6. Training Requirements

Training and Certification	
<b>H</b> FF II/EMT	<b>M</b> FF I
<b>H</b> FF II	<b>L</b> First Responder
<b>M</b> FF I/EMT	

## 7. Recruitment and Retention (R&R) Coordinator

R&R Coordinator	
<b>H</b> Applicants who currently have a coordinator in place	
<b>M</b> Applicants who will request grant funding for a coordinator's position	<b>L</b> Applicants who do not have, or are not requesting, an R&R Coordinator

## 8. Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Plan	
<b>H</b> Applicants who will perform a periodic evaluation of the program's impact	<b>L</b> Applicants who will not perform a period evaluation of the program's impact

## 9. Marketing Plan

Marketing Plan	
<b>H</b> Applicants who currently have a marketing plan in place	

## Marketing Plan

**M** Applicants who will request grant funding for a marketing plan

**L** Applicants who do not have, or will not request funding for, a marketing plan

### 10. Regional Requests

Requests for recruitment or retention that have a regional impact (i.e., an impact beyond the immediate boundaries of the applicant's first-due area) will receive higher consideration.

An eligible applicant, which can include a fire department, may act as a "host applicant" and apply for support of both a regional initiative and its own department's internal needs on one application. In order to apply for a regional project, the host fire department must agree, if awarded, to be responsible for all aspects of the grant. This includes, but is not limited to, accountability for the 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, prior to submitting an application under the Regional Program activities. The agreement should specify the individual and mutual responsibilities of the participating partners, the participant's level of involvement in the project(s), and the proposed distribution of all grant-funded assets. Successful regional applicants shall provide a copy of the signed MOU at the time of award. Any entity named in the application as benefiting from the award shall be a party to the MOU or equivalent document.

In completing the Request Details and Narrative Statement sections of the application, the applicant must include a list of participating third-party organizations that will benefit from the regional project if the project is approved. The third-party organizations that will benefit from the recruitment and retention project may also apply for funding under SAFER as long as the third-party organizations do not apply for a project that could conflict with or duplicate the host applicant's project. Applicants must also certify that they will ensure the fire departments participating in this application have not received grants for similar items/activities.

Note: Only applications submitted under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighter category qualify for regional project requests. Regional projects are not eligible under the Hiring of Firefighters category.

### C. Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Category – National, State, Local, or Tribal Volunteer Firefighter Interest Organizations

The purpose of these grants is to assist national, state, local, or tribal organizations that represent the interests of volunteer firefighters with the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters who are involved with or trained in the operations of firefighting and emergency response. The grants are intended to create an aggregate increase in the number of trained, certified, and competent firefighters capable of safely responding to emergencies on behalf of the fire departments being represented. For this reason, projects that are comprehensive in

nature and based on a clear needs assessment, implementation plan, evaluation plan, and have, or will establish, fire service partnerships will receive higher consideration.

In completing the Request Details and Narrative Statement sections of the application, the applicant must include data that approximates the characteristics of the entire region and/or all fire departments affected by the grant. If awarded, recipients may be required to provide documentation of each fire department’s consent to participate in the application. Applicants must also certify that they will ensure the fire departments participating in this application have not received grants for similar items/activities. The following identifies the elements that the applications will be evaluated on during the pre-scoring process.

**1. Meeting Staffing Standards**

The goal under this SAFER category is to assist departments experiencing a high rate of turnover that have staffing levels significantly below the ideal staffing level required to comply with NFPA standards 1710 or 1720 (for details, see Section 1c. Meeting National Standards). Organizations that currently have the lowest recruitment and retention rates among the entire region and/or all fire departments benefiting from the grant funds are given a higher consideration for funding.

**2. Recruitment/Retention Plan**

It is critical to have a plan for recruitment and retention activities. Applications requesting funding for recruitment or retention programs should be based on formal plans. Applicants must summarize the organization’s recruitment and retention plans in the Narrative Statement and explain how the projects/activities applied will fulfill the plans and meet organizational goals.

**3. Recruitment and Retention (R&R) Coordinator**

R&R Coordinator	
<p><b>H</b> Applicants who currently have a coordinator in place</p>	
<p><b>M</b> Applicants who will request grant funding for a coordinator’s position</p>	<p><b>L</b> Applicants who do not have, or are not requesting, a coordinator</p>

**4. Evaluation Plan**

Evaluation Plan	
<p><b>H</b> Applicants who will perform a periodic evaluation of the program’s impact</p>	<p><b>L</b> Applicants who will not perform a period evaluation of the program’s impact</p>

## 5. Marketing Plan

Marketing Plan	
<b>H</b> Applicants who currently have a marketing plan in place	
<b>M</b> Applicants who will request grant funding for a marketing plan	<b>L</b> Applicants who do not have, or will not request funding for, a marketing plan

### D. Eligible and Ineligible Projects and Costs

Regardless of the eligibility of any costs requested or the panelists' determination, FEMA reserves the right to reduce any requests for funding, in whole or in part, that it deems excessive or otherwise contrary to the best interests of the program.

### Hiring of Firefighters Category – Eligible Costs

#### Hiring of Firefighters Category – Eligible Costs

- Salary and associated benefits (actual payroll expenses) for the positions funded under the SAFER Grant are eligible.
- Only firefighters hired or rehired after the SAFER Grant offer of award (except if awarded under the retention activity) are eligible for grant funding. Firefighters hired after the SAFER Grant offer of award are considered new hires.
- Only full-time positions are eligible for funding. A full-time position is one position that is funded for at least 2,080 hours per year, e.g., 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year. However, recognizing many departments have shifts exceeding a 40-hour workweek, FEMA also will consider funding the job-sharing of a full-time position if the grantee has sufficient justification. A job-share position is a full-time position occupied by more than one person. Example: A department may hire two part-time staff persons at 28 hours each to fulfill the scheduled work hours of one 56-hour shift position.
- Salaries and benefits of firefighters hired under SAFER Funding while they are engaged in training are eligible.
- Costs for overtime that fire departments routinely pay as a part of the base salary or the firefighter's regularly scheduled and contracted shift hours in order to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) are eligible.
- SAFER Grant funds will only pay for operational positions whose primary assignment (more than 50 percent of duties) is fire suppression, which includes staffing a fire suppression vehicle, regardless of collateral duties.
- Volunteer and mostly volunteer fire departments may hire individuals to also fill officer-level positions (e.g., chief, fire inspector, training officer, safety officer) in addition to their primary operational assignment.
- Eligible positions for funding under the Rehiring or Attrition activities must have been laid off or vacated in the two years prior to the start of the application period (February 22, 2016)
- Firefighters who have been issued a formal layoff notice, which includes a specific date for

## Hiring of Firefighters Category – Eligible Costs

the layoff action, prior to the start of the application period, and those who face imminent layoff – within 120 days of the close of the application period – are eligible for SAFER Funding under the Retention activity. Since the application period closes on (March 25, 2016), the layoffs must become effective on or before (July 23, 2016).

- Any layoff action not executed in accordance with the terms of the official layoff notice or which does not meet the above requirements may not qualify for funding in the rehiring of laid off firefighters or retention categories. Applicants who do not meet these parameters must apply under the New Hire activity.
- Eligible positions under the Retention category must be employees of the department at the time of an offer of award. Note that if a retention position become vacant after award, departments must fill the vacancy with a new hire in order to maintain the operational staffing level.

## Hiring of Firefighters Category – Ineligible Costs

### Hiring of Firefighters Category – Ineligible Costs

- The salaries and benefits of firefighters who are current employees or were hired prior to an offer of award (except under the retention activity) are ineligible.
- The SAFER Grant may not be used to fund promotions (e.g., pay a current member a higher salary by placing them in a new SAFER-funded position). If a department chooses to promote a current member, SAFER Grant funding may be used to fund the vacated firefighter position.
- Pre-application costs, such as grant writer fees, administrative costs, and indirect costs associated with hiring or rehiring firefighters are ineligible.
- Costs to train and equip firefighters are ineligible (this does not include the salaries and benefits of firefighters hired under SAFER Funding while they are engaged in training).
- Uniforms and physicals are ineligible.
- Overtime costs are ineligible (except as noted in “eligible costs” above).

## Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Category – Eligible Costs

### Overview

Applicants must correlate the activities for which funding is being requested and the identified recruitment or retention problems or issues being addressed. FEMA will not fund activities if an applicant has not provided sufficient information detailing how an activity being funded will enhance recruitment and retention.

Applicants who propose to focus on retention of volunteers will receive equal consideration as applicants focusing on recruitment of volunteers. A focus on retention may include providing incentives for volunteer firefighter members to continue service in a fire department.

Departments should consult their jurisdiction to understand the full legal and financial implications involved with implementing or sustaining programs that offer benefits or financial awards to firefighters (e.g., stipends, Length of Service Award Program [LOSAP]).

## Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Category – Eligible Costs

All grant related purchases and activities must be incurred, received, and completed within the period of performance. The period of coverage and/or service delivery on all contracts, and agreements may not extend beyond the period of performance of the grant.

All funded activities under Recruitment and Retention must be governed by formally adopted Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Minimally, these SOPs should specify who qualifies for each of the incentives, specific requirements for earning the incentives, and the disposition of the awarded incentives if an individual fails to fulfill the stipulations.

FEMA will not fund any activities that are covered under a department's normal operating budget.

### Recruitment and Retention Category – Eligible Costs

Federal funding should not be used to supplant an existing activity or program. Retroactive payments or recognition for services rendered prior to the grant award are ineligible (with the potential exception of grant writer fees discussed in Appendix C: Award Administration Information, Section I. Grant Writer/Preparation Fees). Examples of initiatives that may receive funding include, but are not limited to:

- Nominal stipends for firefighters where the primary duty is an operational assignment (fire suppression) regardless of collateral duties. (See Appendix B: Programmatic Information and Priorities, Section II. Supporting Definitions for this NOFO.)
- Insurance packages, e.g., Accidental Death and Dismemberment (AD&D), workers compensation, disability, health, dental, life.
- Reimbursement to members while attending required basic training (e.g., compensation for lost wages, mileage, lodging, per diem). Note that costs for mileage, lodging, and per diem must comply with the department's written travel policies and procedures. If policies are not established, costs will only be reimbursed at the Federal Government rate.
- Marketing costs to recruit new volunteer members
- Station internet access
- Computers in common areas
- LED/electronic signs (note: 75 percent of usage must be dedicated to Recruitment and Retention activities – additional restrictions apply; see Section D: Application and Submission Information - Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation [EHP]).
- One set of station duty uniforms for each new recruit only (SAFER considers one set of station duty uniform as one pair of pants, one shirt, one hat, and one pair of boots)
- Non-uniform clothing (t-shirts, jackets, or pullovers) as part of an award program only.
- Station modifications (e.g., converting space into bunkroom - restrictions apply; see Section D: Application and Submission Information - Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation [EHP] Compliance)
- Salary and benefit costs for a recruitment and retention coordinator. Salary and benefit costs should be based on reliable market research (see earnings information published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). Information on how the associated costs were determined should be provided in the Request Details portion of the application.
- Physicals for new recruits only. All grant-funded physicals must meet NFPA 1582 standards (Chapter 6, Medical Evaluations of Candidates 6.1 and Chapter 9, Essential Job Tasks — Specific Evaluation of Medical Conditions in Members). The cost of physicals should be based on local physician or health center prices.

## Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Category – Eligible Costs

- Explorer, cadet, and mentoring programs (see page 35 for specific eligible costs)
- Staffing needs assessment
- Administrative costs up to three percent of the total awarded amount in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. Applicants may apply for administrative costs if the costs are directly related to the implementation of the program for which they are applying. Administrative costs are identifiable costs directly associated with the implementation and management of the grant and cannot exceed three percent of the award.
- Tuition assistance for higher education (including college tuition and not limited to firefighter training or education) and professional certifications (Note: coursework or certifications in this category should be more advanced than what the department typically funds for required minimum-staffing requirements)
- Books and lab fees for higher education or professional certification (not including computers)
- Costs for training not currently covered under the department's operating budget. Training requests must be detailed in the Request Details and Narrative Statement sections of the application and must closely correlate to the applicant's recruitment and/or retention goals.
- Awards program for participation in operational activities, like operational training and/or responding to incidents (e.g., length of service plaques, gift cards, non-uniform clothing)
- New Length of Service Award Programs (LOSAP)
- Mileage reimbursement for operational activities. Note that costs for mileage must comply with the department's written travel policies and procedures. If policies are not established, costs will only be reimbursed at the Federal Government rate.
- Applications for funding in the Recruitment and Retention category could include activities requiring up to four years to complete (with proper justification)
- Indirect costs for national, state, local, or tribal volunteer firefighter interest organizations that are expended pursuant to Section D: Application and Submission Information – Indirect Costs.
- Exercise equipment and gym memberships limited to no more than \$10,000 (total per grant award).
- Grant writer fees (see Appendix C: Award Administration Information, Section I. Grant Writer/Preparation Fees).
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) may be funded for new recruits only (after they have successfully passed an NFPA 1582 compliant physical), but PPE for other types of members or existing members is not eligible.
- Funds are available to acquire OSHA-required and NFPA-compliant PPE for firefighting personnel. Only actual costs for PPE are allowed and will be paid on a reimbursable basis. Allowable costs may be limited to reasonable amounts, as determined by FEMA.
- Recipients are required to provide documentation to support the purchase of PPE (proof that the firefighter(s) have undergone an NFPA 1582 compliant physical and are certified as "fit for duty"). PPE purchased with SAFER Grant funding must be utilized by adequately trained staff. In addition to these requirements, PPE must meet any national or state standards and increase firefighter safety. Failure to meet these requirements may result in ineligibility for PPE funding. Copies of NFPA standards may be reviewed at <http://www.nfpa.org/>.
- Eligible PPE Expenditures:

## Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Category – Eligible Costs

- One set of PPE for structural or wildland firefighting per new recruit.
- SAFER considers a complete set of structural PPE to be comprised of one SCBA mask/face piece, one pair of pants, one coat, one helmet, one hood, one pair of boots, one pair of gloves, and one pair of suspenders. In those jurisdictions where additional PPE, like Personal Safety/Rescue Bailout Systems are statutorily required, SAFER will consider all statutorily required items to be part of a complete PPE set.
- SAFER considers a complete set of wildland PPE to be comprised of: one pair of boots, one set of coveralls (or pants, coat, and suspenders), one pair of gloves, one hood, one set of goggles, one helmet, and one fire shelter).
- American National Standards Institute (ANSI)-approved retro-reflective highway apparel
- Ineligible PPE Expenditures:
  - Three-quarter length rubber boots
  - Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBAs) (not including SCBA masks/face pieces)
  - PASS Devices
  - Spare cylinders
  - Bomb disposal suits
  - PPE for hazardous materials and other specialized incidents
  - More than one set of PPE per member
  - PPE for existing members

### **Remodeling/Renovation of Existing Facilities**

- Remodeling/Renovation of Existing Facilities using SAFER Funds may not exceed \$10,000.
- Remodeling/renovations to an existing facility are allowable. The renovations must be minor interior alterations not to exceed \$10,000 (total per grant award).
- Eligible applicants must provide a cost breakdown in the Request Details section of the application. The costs must be justified in the Narrative Statement section as well.
- Remodeling/renovations may not change the footprint or profile of the building.
- Any request for modifications to facilities may require Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP) review (see Section D: Application and Submission Information - Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation [EHP]). Recipients are encouraged to have completed as many steps as possible for a successful EHP Review in support of their proposal for funding (i.e., coordination with their State Historic Preservation Office to identify potential historic preservation issues and to discuss the potential for project effects; compliance with all state and EHP laws and requirements).
- Written approval must be provided by FEMA prior to the use of any SAFER Funds for remodeling or renovation. If awarded funds for remodeling or renovation, recipients may be required to submit evidence of approved zoning ordinances, architectural plans, any other locally required planning permits, and a notice of interest.

### **Explorer/Cadet Programs**

Eligible items include but are not limited to:

- One set of station duty uniforms (SAFER considers one set of station duty uniform as one pair of pants, one shirt, one hat, and one pair of boots).
- Training (Non-Immediate Danger to Life and Health or IDLH)

## Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Category – Eligible Costs

- One set of structural or wildland PPE (as defined above but not including an SCBA mask/face piece because PPE for explorers or cadets may not be used in an IDLH atmosphere)
- Insurance
- Coordinator's position
- Workers compensation insurance
- Transportation costs
- Medical exams

## Recruitment and Retention Category – Ineligible Costs

- Salary and benefits for firefighters
- Costs incurred prior to an offer of award except for grant writer fees; see Appendix C: Award Administration Information - Grant Writer/Preparation Fees, Vehicles
- Fire suppression equipment or vehicles
- Fire simulators, fire evolution, or fire training props (e.g., burn trailers, forcible entry, rescue/smoke maze, flashover simulators),
- Sirens or other outdoor warning devices
- Communication equipment including cell phones, pagers, portable radios, or Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) systems
- Cash payments (including gift cards) or award programs for non-operational activities
- Payments for travel to or participation in leisure activities such as theatre tickets, entertainment tickets, and trips (e.g., professional sporting events)
- Costs associated with award banquets, such as food, refreshments, entertainment, or rental facilities. Reimbursement for actual awards (e.g., plaques and trophies) is eligible.
- Costs for food or refreshments
- Costs for training currently covered under the department's operating budget, e.g., tuition or instructor fees for department-mandated, basic-level training.
- Services at a member's personal residence (e.g., internet access, plowing of driveways)
- Furniture (except for newly converted bunkrooms), televisions, fixtures, appliances (e.g., refrigerators), and entertainment equipment
- "Giveaways," such as pencils, pens, t-shirts, cups, mugs, or balloons, for recruitment events
- Fees for courses and training that are available free of charge on the internet or at a state/local training facilities (e.g., NIMS 100, 700, 800)
- Costs for fuel
- Annual medical exams (not including NFPA 1582 physicals for new recruits)

## Recruitment and Retention Category – Explorer/Cadet Ineligible Costs

- SCBA, including mask/face piece
- Anything involving the IDLH atmosphere
- Vehicles
- Warning lights for private vehicles
- Any activities precluded by the authority having jurisdiction
- Radios, cell phones, or pagers

## Appendix C: Award Administration Information

Appendix C contains more detailed information on SAFER Award Administration. Reviewing this information may help grant recipients in the programmatic and financial administration of their award(s).

### 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](mailto:DHSOIGHOTLINE@dhs.gov)

## I. Grant Writer/Preparation Fees (Recruitment and Retention Category Only)

Applicants under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters category are allowed to hire and reimburse a grant writer to assist in the application process.

Fees for grant writers may be included as a pre-award expenditure. Fees payable on a contingency basis are not an eligible expense. For grant writer fees to be eligible as a pre-award expenditure, the fees must be specifically identified and listed in the Request Details section of the application. FEMA will only consider reimbursements for application preparation, but not administration, up to but not more than \$1,500. Pursuant to 2 CFR Part 180, recipients may not use federal grant funds to reimburse any entity, including a grant writer or preparer, if that entity is presently suspended or debarred by the Federal Government from receiving funding under federally funded grants or contracts. Recipients must verify that the contractor is not suspended or debarred from participating in specified federal procurement or non-procurement transactions pursuant to 2 CFR § 180.300.

By submitting the application, applicants are certifying all of the information contained therein is true and an accurate reflection of the organization and, regardless of the applicant's intent, the submission of information that is false or misleading may result in actions by FEMA that include, but are not limited to, the submitted application not being considered for award, temporary withholding of funding under the existing award pending investigation, or referral to the Office of the Inspector General.

Prior to submission of the application, please review all work produced by grant writers or other third parties for accuracy. In addition, the fees must have been paid within 30 days of the end of the application period and prior to any contact with SAFER Program Office staff or an Offer of Award.

Applicants will be required to provide documentation to support these pre-award expenditures. A copy of the cancelled check and bank statement shall be provided upon request. Failure to provide the requested documentation may result in the grant writer fee being deemed ineligible and the grant reduced accordingly.

**NOTE:** FEMA requires that all grant writer or preparer information must be entered into the Overview section of the SAFER application, whether that person, entity, or agent is compensated or not.

## II. Maintenance and Sustainment for SAFER Programs

The use of FEMA preparedness grant funds for the costs of repairs or replacement, as well as maintenance contracts, warranties, and user fees may be allowable.

The intent of eligible Maintenance and Sustainment activities is to provide direct support to the critical capabilities developed using FEMA and other DHS grants and support activities. Routine upkeep and the supplies, expendables, or one-time use items that support routine upkeep (e.g., gasoline, tire replacement, routine oil changes, monthly inspections, or grounds and facility maintenance) are the responsibility of the recipient and may not be funded with SAFER Funding.

Generally, when purchasing a maintenance agreement, service contract, or extended warranty for systems or equipment, the period of coverage provided under such a plan may not extend beyond the period of performance of the grant with which the agreement, warranty, or contract is purchased.

However, only if the maintenance contract or extended warranty is purchased incidental to the original purchase of the system or equipment, recipients may procure maintenance or warranty coverage that exceeds the period of performance, as explained in FEMA Policy 205-402-125-1, document available at [http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1915-25045-9444/gpd\\_maintenance\\_policy.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1915-25045-9444/gpd_maintenance_policy.pdf)

The duration of an extended warranty purchased incidental to the original purchase of the equipment may exceed the period performance as long as the coverage purchased is consistent with that which is typically provided for, or available through, these types of agreements, warranties<sup>6</sup>, or contracts. When purchasing a stand-alone warranty, or extending an existing maintenance contract on an already-owned piece of equipment or system, coverage purchased may not exceed the period of performance of the award used to purchase the maintenance agreement or warranty. As with warranties and maintenance agreements, this policy extends to licenses and user fees as well.

Even if purchased incidental to the original purchase of the equipment, the duration of an extended maintenance agreement or warranty must also be reasonable for the type of equipment or system being purchased. For example, if a vendor offers a 10-year extended warranty incidental to the purchase of a piece of equipment, but the useful life of that equipment being purchased is five years, the purchase of a 10-year extended warranty would not be a reasonable cost and may not be charged to the grant.

### III. Taxes, Fees, Levies and Amendments

Taxes, fees, levies, or assessments that the recipient is legally required to pay and is directly related to any eligible SAFER Program acquisition activity may be charged to an SAFER Award pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.470. These charges shall be identified and enumerated in the AFG application's Narrative and the Request Details section of the acquisition activity.

Any avoidable and unreasonable costs that result from the action or inaction of a recipient (or recipient's agent), or that prevent that recipient from enjoying any lawful exemption, waiver, or reduction of any tax, fee, levy, or assessment directly related to any eligible SAFER Program acquisition activity, are not chargeable to any SAFER Award.

**Example:** Governmental entities and Public Safety Agencies are exempt from some Federal Communications Commission (FCC) fees\*, but only if the eligible organization submits an exemption or waiver request to the FCC.

\*Government entities are not required to pay FCC regulatory fees. Non-profit entities (exempt under Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code) also may be exempt. The FCC requires that any entity claiming exempt status submit, or have on file with the FCC a valid IRS Determination Letter

documenting its nonprofit status or certification from a governmental authority attesting to its exempt status. For more information, please visit <http://www.fcc.gov/>.

#### **IV. Subscription, Access, Membership, Rental, Lease or User Fees**

No subscription, access, membership, rental, lease, termination of services, or user fees, are chargeable to any SAFER Award.

#### **V. Excess Funds**

After completing the initial projects proposed in the recipient's application, some recipients may have unexpended funds remaining in their budget. These excess funds may result from any combination of under-budget acquisition activities or competitive procurement processes.

These cost shared excess funds may be utilized to enhance or continue the approved project(s). FEMA and AFGP expect excess funds to be obligated concurrent with an award's period of performance to address a known or critical need related to the awarded project(s).

#### **VI. Procurement Integrity**

Through audits conducted by the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General (OIG) and AFG Program Office grant monitoring, findings have shown that some SAFER recipients have not fully adhered to the proper procurement requirements when spending grant funds. Anything less than full compliance with federal procurement policies jeopardizes the integrity of the grant as well as the grant program. Below, we highlight the federal procurement requirements for SAFER recipients when procuring goods and services with federal grant funds. DHS will include a review of recipients' procurement practices as part of the normal monitoring activities. **All procurement activity must be conducted in accordance with Federal Procurement Standards at 2 C.F.R. § 200.317 – 200.326.** Select requirements under these standards are listed below. The recipient must comply with all requirements of these standards, even if they are not listed below.

With the exception of State governments, which must comply with the terms of 2 C.F.R. § 200.317, the non-federal entity must use its own documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable State, local, and tribal laws and regulations, provided that the procurements conform to applicable federal law and the standards identified in 2 C.F.R. Part 200. These standards include, but are not limited to providing for full and open competition consistent with the standards of 2 C.F.R. § 200.319.

Among the requirements of 2 C.F.R. § 200.319, in order to ensure objective contractor performance and eliminate unfair competitive advantage, contractors that develop or draft specifications, requirements, statements of work, or invitations for bids or requests for proposals must be excluded from competing for such procurements. Some of the situations considered to be restrictive of competition include but are not limited to:

- Placing unreasonable requirements on firms in order for them to qualify to do business;
- Requiring unnecessary experience and excessive bonding;
- Noncompetitive pricing practices between firms or between affiliated companies;
- Noncompetitive contracts to consultants that are on retainer contracts;
- Organizational conflicts of interest;

- Specifying only a “brand name” product instead of allowing “an equal” product to be offered and describing the performance or other relevant requirements of the procurement; and
- Any arbitrary action in the procurement process.

Generally, a recipient may seek to procure good or services from prequalified lists of persons, firms, or products which are used in acquiring goods and services, e.g., Government Services Administration (GSA) schedule, a State schedule, or co-operative or group purchasing, as having satisfied AFG Program requirements for competition. In order for such procurements by entities other than State governments to be permissible, the following must be true:

- The procurement of the original contract or purchasing schedule and its use by the recipient complies with state and local law, regulations, and written procurement procedures.
- The state or other entity that originally procured the original contract or purchasing schedule with the express purpose of making it available to the recipient and other similar types of entities, the contract or purchasing schedule specifically allows for such use, and the work to be performed for the local government falls within the scope of work under the contract as to type, amount, and geography.
- The procurement of the original contract or purchasing schedule complied with all of the procurement standards applicable to a local government at 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.318 to 326.
- With respect to the use of a purchasing schedule, the recipient must follow ordering procedures that adhere to state and local laws and regulations and the minimum requirements of full and open competition under 2 C.F.R. Part 200.

If a recipient other than a State government seeks to use such a prequalified list, purchasing schedule, or other similar type of arrangement, it must first contact the AFG Program Office.

To the greatest extent possible, the FEMA recommends that federal grant funds be used for the purchase of goods and services manufactured, assembled, and distributed in the United States.

Pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.318(c)(1), the recipient (other than States) are required to maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of contracts. No employee, officer, or agent may participate in the selection, award, or administration of a contract supported by a federal award if he or she has a real or apparent conflict of interest. Such a conflict of interest would arise when the employee, officer or agent, any member of his or her immediate family, his or her partner, or an organization which employs or is about to employ any of the parties indicated herein has a financial or other interest in or a tangible personal benefit from a firm considered for a contract. The officers, employees, and agents of the non-federal entity may neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from contractors or parties to subcontracts. However, non-federal entities may set standards for situations in which the financial interest is not substantial or the gift is an unsolicited item of nominal value. The standards of conduct must provide for disciplinary actions to be applied for violations of such standards by officers, employees, or agents of the non-federal entity.

If the recipient (other than States) has a parent, affiliate, or subsidiary organization that is not a state, local government, or Indian tribe, the non-federal entity must also maintain written standards of conduct covering organizational conflicts of interest. Organizational conflicts of interest means that because of relationships with a parent company, affiliate, or subsidiary organization, the non-federal entity is unable or appears to be unable to be impartial in conducting a procurement action involving a related organization.

The non-federal entity must disclose in writing any potential conflict of interest to the federal awarding agency or pass-through entity in accordance with applicable Federal Awarding agency policy.

**NOTE:** For the purposes of this conflicts of interest under procurements executed by the recipient, FEMA considers volunteers of an organization and grant writers to be employees, officers, and/or agents of the grantee. As such, no volunteer or member of an organization or anyone involved in preparing the application for funding can participate in, or benefit from, the procurement if federal funds are involved.

Recipients that purchase items with grant funds from vendors who employ any of their volunteers/members will have to document how they avoided a *Conflict of Interests* during the procurement process (i.e., specific details regarding how the members/volunteers removed themselves or how they were prevented from participating in the process). Recipients may be required to provide this documentation upon request. Recipients who fail to fully document their purchases may find their expenditures questioned and subsequently disallowed. FEMA reserves the right to request and review any and all bids/spec prior to purchase. Recipients may be subject to an audit after award.

### **Documentation**

Recipients are required to maintain and retain the following:

- Backup documentation, such as bids and quotes
- Cost/price analyses on file for review by federal personnel
- Other documents required by 2 C.F.R. Part 200

FEMA generally recommends that the recipient maintain the following documentation for federally funded purchases:

- Specifications
- Solicitations
- Competitive quotes or proposals
- Basis for selection decisions
- Purchase orders
- Contracts
- Invoices
- Cancelled checks

Recipients who fail to fully document their purchases may find their expenditures questioned and subsequently disallowed.

### **Specifications**

When drafting bid specifications, and prior to publicizing or publishing such bid specifications, a recipient should ensure the following:

- Bids and specifications are not proprietary to any one product or manufacturer
- In-state or local geographical preferences are not imposed in the evaluation of bids or proposals

## **VII. Payments and Amendments**

### **Payments**

SAFER Payment/Drawdown Requests are generated using the eGrants system.

SAFER Payment/Drawdown Requests from state, local, or tribal government entities will be governed by applicable federal regulations in effect at the time a grant is awarded to the recipient and may be either advances or reimbursements.

Recipients should not expend funds or request drawdowns until all special conditions listed on the grant award document have been met and request for payment in the eGrants system has been approved.

Recipients should draw down funds based upon immediate disbursement requirements; however, FEMA strongly encourages recipients to draw down funds as close to disbursement or expenditure as possible to avoid accruing interest.

### **Advances**

Recipients shall be paid in advance, provided they maintain or demonstrate the willingness and ability to maintain procedures to minimize the time elapsing between the transfer of the funds and their disbursement by the recipient, and financial management systems that meet the standards for fund control and accountability as established in 2 C.F.R. Part 200.

Although advance drawdown requests are permissible, recipients remain subject to applicable federal law in effect at the time a grant is awarded to the recipient governing interest requirements, including the Uniform Administrative Requirements Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200 and the Cash Management Improvement Act (CMIA) and its implementing regulations at 31 CFR Part 205. Interest under CMIA will accrue from the time federal funds are credited to a recipient's account until the time the recipient pays out the funds for program purposes.

Recipients must follow applicable federal regulations governing interest earned on payment advances in effect at the time a grant is awarded to the recipient, including § 200.305.

For the rate to use in calculating interest, please visit Treasury Current Value rate at: <http://www.fms.treas.gov/cvfr/index.html>.

### **Reimbursement**

Reimbursement of the recipient is the preferred method when the requirements to be paid in advance, per applicable federal regulations in effect at the time a grant is awarded to the recipient, cannot be met. In accordance with U.S. Department of Treasury regulations at 31 CFR Part 205, if applicable, the recipient shall maintain procedures to minimize the time elapsing between the transfer of funds and the disbursement of said funds.

### **Rebates**

Recipients shall disburse program income, rebates, refunds, contract settlements, audit recoveries, and interest earned on such funds before requesting additional cash payments, in accordance with applicable federal regulations in effect at the time a grant is awarded to a recipient.

The reduction of federal financial participation via rebates/refunds may generate excess funds for the recipient, if the recipient had already obligated their Cost Share match based upon the original award figures.

If the recipient had already obligated their original Cost Share prior to the rebate, then the recipient may have minimum excess funds equal to the difference between the original Cost Share less the rebate adjusted Cost Share.

### **Payment Requests During Closeout**

For 90 days after the expiration of the period of performance, during an award's closeout reconciliation, a recipient may only submit reimbursement payment requests.

Reimbursement payment requests shall only be for obligations that were obligated within the active period of performance of the award. The recipient's request should contain clear and specific information certifying that the liquidation of federal funds is reimbursement for an obligation properly incurred during the active period of performance; FEMA may request documentation supporting the reimbursement for review.

### **Amendments**

SAFER Award amendments may be approved, on a case-by-case basis, for the following reasons:

- Extension of the period of performance in order to complete the scope of work
- Changes to the activity, mission, retroactive approval [pre-award], closeout issues, some excess funds requests, and requests for maintenance of expenditure waivers
- Cost over/under run (adding funds to award/non-closeout deobligation\* of funds)
- Economic Hardship Waiver

Amendments will only be considered when submitted via the online eGrants system. These requests must contain specific and compelling justifications for the requested change.

The FEMA Grant Programs Directorate strongly encourages the timely expenditure of grant funds by recipients to be consistent with the goals and objectives outlined in AFG Programs.

\*A recipient may deobligate (return) unused funds (those remaining funds drawn down via payment request and/or remaining award funding that was never requested) to DHS prior to the end of an award's Period of Performance. To exercise this option, a recipient must submit a cost over/under run Amendment via the eGrants system and state in their amendment that the unliquidated funds (funds to be returned) are not necessary for the fulfillment or success of the grant's obligations or mission. The recipient must also indicate that it understands that the returned funds will be deobligated and unavailable for any future award expenses.

Deobligation of funds will decrease the federal portion of the grant and the amount of the recipient's Cost Share obligation. FEMA will confirm deobligation amendments with all points of contact; after confirmation of the recipient's intent to deobligate, FEMA will hold the approved deobligation request for 14 calendar days as a period for recipient reconsideration before processing the deobligation request.

### **Period of Performance Amendments and Guidance:**

#### ***Hiring of Firefighters Category***

- The period of performance will be 24 months for all grants awarded under this category.
- A default 180-day recruitment period begins when an application is approved for award under this category.

- The 24 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.
- Recipients can seek reimbursement for grant-related costs incurred during the recruitment period as long as these costs are in the approved budget and scope of work and an amendment is submitted to start the period of performance early.
- The period of performance cannot be started later than 180 days after the award date.

#### ***Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Category***

- The period of performance will be between 12 and 48 months for all grants awarded under this category.
- A default 90-day recruitment period begins when the application is approved for award. This period allows each grantee time to gather resources, initiate processes, and to finalize contracts needed to implement SAFER Grant activities before the start of the period of performance in order to maximize the availability of the funding.
- If a recipient is able to begin their recruitment or retention activities during the 90-day recruitment period, the period of performance may begin at that time. However recipients must submit an amendment requesting that the period of performance start before the end of the 90-day recruitment period.
- Recipients can seek reimbursement for grant-related costs incurred during the recruitment period as long as these costs are in the approved budget and scope of work and an amendment is submitted to start the period of performance early.
- The period of performance cannot start later than 90 days after the recruitment period.

## **VIII. Grantee Responsibilities Post Award**

### **SAFER Award Grant recipients must agree to the following:**

Recipients must perform all tasks (scope of work) as outlined in the grantee's application approved by FEMA within the period of performance, comply with the terms of this NOFO, comply with all the terms and conditions of their grant award, including any special conditions in accordance with the articles of agreement, and comply with all applicable Federal statutory and regulatory requirements. Recipients that do not fulfill their obligations under their SAFER Grant will be considered in default and may be required to return the federal funds disbursed under the grant award.

Recipients under the Hiring of Firefighters category who lay off any operational personnel during the two- year period of performance will be considered in default of their grant and the award will be terminated. Recipients may be required to return the federal funds disbursed under the grant award. Recipients under the Hiring of Firefighters category must agree to maintain operational staffing at the level that existed at the time of award and must also retain all SAFER-funded positions throughout the grant's full two year period of performance unless the grantee has been afforded a waiver of this requirement. At the time of award, recipients under the Hiring of Firefighters category must submit a current (pre-SAFER) roster listing paid operational/firefighting personnel, in support of NFPA 1710 or NFPA 1720, who are in full-time or job share positions. The program office will work with a grantee to

establish the correct staffing maintenance number which combines the number of pre-SAFER and SAFER-funded operational positions. Once this is established, recipients must agree to maintain this number throughout the two year period of performance by taking active and timely steps to fill any vacancies.

Recipients who are unable (due to documentable economic hardship) to backfill non-SAFER operational positions that are vacated through attrition (e.g., resignation, retirement) after award may petition FEMA for a waiver of staffing maintenance requirements. An approved waiver allows a grantee to decrease and reestablish the staffing maintenance number agreed to at the time of award by the number of positions that a grantee is unable to fill. In order to qualify for this waiver, the economic hardship must affect the entire public safety sector in a grantee's jurisdiction, not only the fire department. Waivers will not be granted for SAFER-funded positions. Recipients who fail to maintain this level of staffing risk losing the federal funds awarded under this grant.

Since the goal of the SAFER Grant Program is to enhance incident scene safety, recipients must certify that the primary assignment (more than 50 percent of duties) of all SAFER-funded firefighters will be an operational assignment (fire suppression) regardless of collateral duties, which includes staffing a fire suppression vehicle.

Recipients must retain grant files and supporting documentation in a manner consistent with 2 C.F.R. § 200.333 – no less than for three years after submission of the closeout report (see below), and in some cases longer pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.333. FEMA may require access to any pertinent books, documents, papers, or records belonging to a recipient. The DHS Office of Inspector General or the Comptroller General of the United States may also require access to a grantee's books and records. The required documentation for federally-funded purchases should include specifications, solicitations, competitive quotes or proposals, basis for selection decisions, purchase orders or contracts, invoices, and cancelled checks. Recipients who fail to document purchases may find their expenditures will be questioned and disallowed.

Recipients must provide periodic performance reports to FEMA. In all years of the grant's period of performance, for both the Hiring of Firefighters and the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Categories, recipients must submit quarterly performance reports as well as a final performance report at grant closeout. Payments are requested online using the automated system and payments are based on actual expenses incurred during the period covered by the payment request. Quarterly performance reporting is required even if the grantee has not requested funding within the quarter.

At the end of the grant's period of performance, all recipients are required to produce a final report on how the grant funding was used and the benefits realized from the award. Recipients must submit a final financial report and a final performance report (e.g., closeout report) within 90 days after the end of the period of performance. After these reports have been reviewed and approved by FEMA, recipients are given an official notice that the closeout has been accepted and completed. Any remaining grant funds are de-obligated. The grantee is responsible for returning any funds that have been drawn down but remain unspent.

Notwithstanding any provision of other laws, firefighters hired under these grants shall not be discriminated against, or be prohibited from, engaging in volunteer firefighting activities in another jurisdiction during off-duty hours.

To the extent possible, recipients should seek, recruit, and appoint women and members of racial and ethnic minority groups within the applicant's department.

FEMA strongly encourages applicants, to the extent practicable, to seek, recruit, and hire military veterans to increase their ranks within their departments.