

Fire Prevention and Safety Grants

In addition to the grants available to fire departments in fiscal year 2003 through the competitive grant program, we will set aside as much as \$27,500,000 of the funds available under the Assistance to Firefighter Grant Program in order for us to make grants to, or enter into contracts or cooperative agreements with, national, State, local or community organizations or agencies, including fire departments, for the purpose of carrying out fire prevention and injury prevention programs.

In accordance with statutory requirement to fund fire prevention activities, our support to Fire Prevention and Safety Grant activities will concentrate on organizations that focus on the prevention of injuries to children from fire. In addition to this priority, we are also placing an emphasis on funding innovative projects that focus on protecting the USFA-identified high-risk populations, *i.e.*, children under fourteen, seniors over sixty-five, and firefighters. Since the victims of burns experience both short- and long-term physical and psychological effects, we are also placing a priority on programs that focus on reducing the immediate and long-range effects of fire and burn injuries, and primarily those affecting children.

A separate Notice of Funds Availability will be issued to announce the pertinent details of the Fire Prevention and Safety Grant portion of this program.

Applicant Eligibility

Eligible applicants for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program are limited to fire departments of a State. Under the existing interim final rule, a "fire department of a State" is defined as an agency or organization that has a formally recognized arrangement with a State, local or tribal authority (city, county, parish, fire district, township, town or other governing body) to provide fire suppression services to a population within a fixed geographical area. For the purpose of this program, "State" is defined as the fifty States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

A fire department can apply for assistance for its emergency medical services unit provided the unit falls organizationally under the auspices of the fire department. Airport fire departments and port authority fire departments are eligible, but only if they have a formally recognized arrangement

with the local jurisdiction to provide fire suppression services, on a first-due basis, outside the confines of the airport or port facilities. Airport fire departments and port authority fire departments whose sole responsibility is suppression of fires on the airport grounds or port are not eligible for this grant program.

Fire departments that are Federal, or contracted by the Federal government, and which are solely responsible under their formally recognized arrangement for suppression of fires on Federal installations, are not eligible for this grant program. Fire departments or fire stations that are not independent but are part of, or controlled by a larger fire department or agency are typically not eligible to apply on their own, but may be included in the larger agency's application. Fire departments that are for-profit departments (*i.e.*, do not have specific non-profit status or are not municipally based) are not eligible to apply for assistance under this program. Also not eligible for this program are non-fire based EMS companies, ambulance services, rescue squads, auxiliaries, dive teams, urban search and rescue teams, fire service organizations or associations, and State/local agencies such as a forest service, fire marshal, hospitals, and training offices.

Application Process

Eligible applicants will be able to access the application on USFA's e-grant system. This system is accessible from the USFA Internet homepages. The application will only be available during the application period. Although we do not encourage the use of paper applications, paper applications will be available for applicants that do not have access to the Internet. If an applicant does not have access over the Internet to the USFA Web site, the applicant may contact us directly to request a copy via mail. Although we do not recommend it due to inherent delays and relatively short application period, those fire departments interested in receiving an application in the mail must call our toll-free hotline at 866-274-0960.

Applicants applying via paper application rather than the automated e-grant system should complete and submit their applications to us at Grant Program Technical Assistance Center, 16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, Maryland, 21727-8998. Faxed applications will not be considered. We will not be responsible for applications sent to any other address.

The application period for the 2003 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program is Monday, March 10, 2003, to Friday, April 11, 2003. Complete application packages must be submitted electronically or otherwise received by us on or before the close of business (5 p.m. EST) on Friday, April 11, 2003. Applications submitted by mail must be post-marked by April 8, 2003, or received by us on or before close of business (5 p.m. EST) on April 11, 2003. We will not accept late, faxed, or emailed applications.

The automated grant application system has features built into it that will guarantee that the application is complete when submitted. We will not accept incomplete applications submitted by mail. We will not be responsible for any application that is not mailed to the address specified above.

We will evaluate each application in the preliminary screening process to determine which applications best address the program's established priorities. This preliminary screening is based on the applicants' answers to the activity-specific questions. Each activity within an application will be scored and applications that have multiple activities will have the scores prorated based on the amount of funding requested for each activity.

The best applications as determined in this preliminary step will be deemed to be in the "competitive range." All applications in the competitive range will be subject to a second level review by a technical evaluation panel. The panelists will assess the application's merits with respect to the clarity and detail provided in the narrative about the project, the applicant's financial need, and the project's purported benefit to be derived from the cost.

Using the evaluation criteria included herein, the panelists will independently score each application before them and then discuss the merits/shortcomings of the application in an effort to reconcile any major discrepancies. A consensus on the score is not required. The assigned score will reflect the degree to which the applicant: clearly relates their proposed project; demonstrates financial need; and, details a high benefit to cost value of the proposed activities. The highest scoring applications resulting from this second level of review will then be considered for award.

In order to be successful in the panel evaluation, the narrative should include a detailed description of the planned activities, uses for the grant funds including details of each budget line item. For example, if personnel costs are