

consider requests for reimbursement for these on an exception basis. Expenses incurred after the application deadline but prior to award may be eligible for reimbursement if the expenses were justified, unavoidable (*i.e.*, urgent and compelling), consistent with the scope of work, and specifically approved by the Assistance Officer. Expenses, obligations, commitments or contracts incurred or entered into prior to the application deadline are not eligible to be included as an expense.

#### Evaluation Criteria

Specific rating criteria for each of the eligible programs and activities follow below. These rating criteria will provide an understanding of the grant program's priorities and the expected cost effectiveness of any proposed projects.

##### (1) *Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety Program.*

(i) *Training Activities.* We believe that more benefit is derived from the direct delivery of training than from the purchase of training materials, equipment or props. Therefore, applications focused on direct delivery of training will receive a higher competitive rating. We will also accord higher rating to programs achieving benefits from statutorily required training over non-mandatory or strictly voluntary training. We will rate more highly those programs that benefit the highest percentage of targeted personnel within a fire department. Training designated for Rapid Intervention Teams will have a slightly higher competitive advantage. It should be noted that on average the sending of trainees away for training will be less cost effective than delivery of the same training on-site.

Due to the inherent differences between urban, suburban, and rural firefighting characteristics, we have developed different priorities in the training activity for departments that service these different types of communities. For departments serving rural communities, we believe that funding of basic, operational-level firefighting, rescue, and responder training (*i.e.*, training in basic firefighting duties or operating fire apparatus) has greater benefit than funding of officer training, safety officer training, or operations training. Likewise, we feel there is a greater cost-benefit to officer training than for other specialized training such as mass casualty, HAZMAT, WMD awareness, advance rescue, or inspector training. Conversely, for departments that are servicing communities that are suburban or urban, we believe there is a higher benefit to be gained by funding

specialized training such as mass casualty, HAZMAT, advance rescue, or inspector training than the funding of officer training, safety officer training, or operations training, which in turn has a higher benefit than basic, operational, or awareness level activities.

(ii) *Wellness and Fitness Activities.* We believe that in order to have an effective wellness/fitness program, fire departments must offer an entry physical examination, an immunization program, and periodic health screenings. Accordingly, applicants seeking funding in this category must currently offer all three benefits, or must propose to initiate any of these benefits not currently offered with these grant funds in order to receive additional consideration for funding this activity. We believe the greatest benefit will be realized by supporting new wellness and fitness programs, and therefore, we will accord higher competitive ratings to those applicants lacking wellness/fitness programs over those applicants that already possess a wellness/fitness program. We believe that programs with annual physicals and general health screening provide high benefits and programs including employee assistance-type offerings, incident rehabilitation, formal fitness regimens, and/or injury prevention components offer significant benefits. Injury rehabilitation is eligible but provide a low cost benefit. Finally, since participation is critical to achieving any benefits from a wellness or fitness program, we will give higher competitive rating to departments whose wellness and fitness programs mandate participation as well as programs that provide incentives for participation.

(iii) *Firefighting Equipment Acquisition.* The stated purpose of this grant program is to protect the health and safety of the public and firefighters from fire and fire related hazards. As such, we believe that this grant program will achieve the greatest benefits if we provide funds to fire departments purchasing basic firefighting equipment before any other type of equipment. We will afford departments buying basic firefighting equipment for the first time (equipment never owned before) a higher competitive rating than departments buying replacement equipment or equipment that will be used to expand the department's capabilities into new mission areas. We believe there is more benefit realized to bring a department up to the applicable minimum standard (*i.e.*, as required by statute, regulation, or professional firefighting guidance), rather than to the department that is replacing equipment

or enhancing capabilities. Equipment designated for Rapid Intervention Teams will have a slightly higher competitive advantage.

(iv) *Personal Protective Equipment Acquisition.* A stated purpose of this grant program is to protect the health and safety of firefighters from fire, fire related hazards and other hazardous conditions. The goal is to provide active firefighters with a complete set of equipment, breathing apparatus as well as turnout gear. As such, this grant program will achieve the greatest benefits if we provide funds to fire departments purchasing basic protective equipment for firefighting before other types of protective equipment. In order to achieve the goal and maximize the benefit to the firefighting community, we believe that we must fund those applicants needing to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to a high percentage of their personnel. Accordingly, we will give a high competitive rating in this category to fire departments in which a large percentage of their active firefighting staff do not have any personal protective equipment and to departments that wish to purchase enough PPE to equip 100 percent of their active firefighting staff. We will also give a higher competitive rating to departments that are purchasing the equipment for the first time as opposed to departments replacing obsolete or substandard equipment (*e.g.*, equipment that does not meet current NFPA and OSHA standards), or purchasing equipment for a new mission. Departments that are replacing used gear that is very old, will be afforded a higher competitive rating than a department whose gear is relatively new. We will provide a higher competitive rating to departments requesting integrated PASS devices than to those departments that are requesting non-integrated PASS devices. We also believe it is more cost beneficial to fund departments that have a high volume of fire related responses per year before funding less active departments. With respect to call volume, departments will be compared to departments with similar characteristics, *i.e.*, urban compared to urban, suburban compared to suburban, and rural compared to rural. Equipment designated for Rapid Intervention Teams will have a slightly higher competitive advantage.

(v) *Modifications to Fire Stations and Facilities.* The stated purposes of this grant program is to protect the health and safety of firefighters, as such, eligible projects under this activity that are designed to directly protect the health and safety of firefighters. We believe that more benefit would be