

Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program Overview



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Assistance to Firefighters Grant Overview

Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG)

- Provides funding for critical apparatus and equipment essential to fire department operations, including engines, ladder trucks, rescue vehicles, self-contained breathing apparatus, protective equipment, and communication systems
- Supports facility modifications, recruit training academies, and equipment upgrades necessary to maintain operational readiness and personnel safety standards

Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER)

- Delivers funding to hire additional firefighters and retain experienced personnel threatened by budget constraints
- Enables departments to achieve minimum staffing requirements and comply with NFPA response standards for enhanced operational effectiveness and safety
- Recruitment and retention programs for volunteer fire organizations

Fire Prevention and Safety (FPS)

- Supports community risk reduction programs, smoke alarm installation initiatives, and fire safety education targeting high-risk populations
- Funds innovative prevention strategies and research initiatives that reduce emergency response demands and enhance public safety within service areas

Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program History

Congress established the AFG grant program in 2000. With these grants, departments can purchase equipment, training, and other departmental needs.

In 2003, Congress authorized the SAFER program to address staffing shortages in career, volunteer, and combination across the nation. These shortages prevent departments from meeting industry staffing and response time standards, while placing firefighters at greater risk when they respond to fires and other emergencies.

AFG and SAFER grants are awarded directly to fire departments and other eligible organizations. Grant applications are peer-reviewed, and applicants must agree to a matching requirement.

In addition to the many other benefits of these programs, the direct nature of the awards means that rather than being funneled through state pipelines; fire departments can put the funding to use immediately.

Grant Program	Inception	Total Funding Awarded
AFG (Assistance to Firefighters Grant)	FY 2001	~\$8.1 billion
SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response)	FY 2005	~\$5.8 billion
FPS (Fire Prevention & Safety)	FY 2002	~\$888 million

Federal Fire Grant Programs Overview FY 2024

\$291.6M

AFG Equipment

Provides essential apparatus, SCBA, and protective equipment necessary for safe firefighting operations. Funding supports major purchases from fire engines to thermal imaging cameras, ensuring departments maintain mission-ready capabilities

\$32.4M

SAFER Recruitment

Strengthens volunteer firefighter programs through recruitment initiatives, training support, and retention efforts. This funding helps departments build and maintain reliable volunteer forces essential for community protection

\$291.6M

SAFER Hiring

Addresses critical staffing needs by funding new firefighter positions. This program reduces response times, improves operational safety, and prevents dangerous understaffing situations that compromise emergency response effectiveness

\$32.4M

Fire Prevention and Safety

Supports proactive community risk reduction through public education programs, smoke detector installations, and outreach initiatives. These programs prevent fires before they occur, reducing emergency response demands



Application and Preparation Strategies



Assess Departmental Needs

- Conduct a comprehensive apparatus and equipment inventory, identify training deficiencies, and evaluate staffing requirements
- Prioritize critical needs based on life safety impact and operational effectiveness within your response territory



Analyze Award Data

- Research funding patterns for departments of comparable size and scope within your state and region
- Review successful applications to understand effective strategies and typical award amounts
- Examine evaluation criteria and panel feedback to identify reviewer priorities and expectations



Develop Application Strategy

- Establish clear deadlines and assign team responsibilities for comprehensive application completion
- Compile required documentation, secure mutual aid partnerships, and confirm local matching fund availability
- Structure your proposal to directly address program objectives and scoring criteria



Verify Compliance and Readiness

- Confirm that your department meets all program eligibility requirements
- Ensure your proposed project directly supports the grant program's stated mission
- Validate budget accuracy and verify that your implementation timeline is realistic and achievable

Resources and Next Steps

1

Access Official Resources

Visit [FEMA.gov/grants](https://www.fema.gov/grants) for current NOFOs and program requirements

Download application templates and scoring criteria to understand evaluation standards

2

Develop Your Strategy

Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment for your department and align with appropriate grant programs

Establish a realistic timeline - successful applications require extensive preparation

3

Engage Support Networks

Collaborate with your state and local networks for guidance and technical assistance

Participate in grant writing workshops and connect with departments that have secured funding

Successful federal grant acquisition requires thorough preparation and strategic planning.

Begin early, utilize all available resources, and engage professional assistance when necessary.