FireRescue1

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FireGrantsHelp

ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT PROGRAM

2017 AFG
PPE Project Guide

THE EVOLUTION OF TURNOUT GEAR CONTINUES.
G-XTREME® 3.0

GORE® CROSSTECH® black moisture barrier offers the highest breathability in more conditions in conventional turnout gear

GORE® CROSSTECH®
PRODUCTS

Lower collar, deeper neck opening, and hanging throat tab never get in your way

Retailored fit in the chest and sleeves for unrestricted mobility for even the most athletic firefighter

AXTION® Back and AXTION® Sleeve let you make all the right moves

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G·XTREME 3.0

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Editor's Note

Hello,

As we await the opening of the annual Assistance to Firefighters Grant program there are steps that you can take now to plan and develop a competitive application for your turnout gear project. Applications to AFG for turnout gear have consistently been one of the two top activities requested under the Firefighter Operations grant category and for good reason. Turnout gear is utilized on every alarm. It is the core of every fire department. Your department simply cannot exist without it. The Assistance to Firefighters Grant program provides the best means to cover these expenses. However, because of their popularity, turnout gear requests are among the most competitive activities of this grant program.

To assist you in this endeavor, our guide will provide you with information and suggestions to formulate your application for turnout gear. The guide gives you a quick checklist of items essential to your application. It provides information on successfully planning and developing your application and it highlights the new requirements for 2017. It also offers an easy-to-understand segment on administrative requirements for your AFG application. In addition, our guide also contains a section dedicated solely to regional applications for turnout gear.

Good luck and remember it is never too early to start planning your application.

Jerry Brant, Senior Grant Consultant and Grant Writer with FireGrantsHelp and EMSGrantsHelp

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Assistance to Firefighters
Grant 'get ready' checklist

Get started early, before the application period opens, to improve the quality of your grant application. Our grant experts recommend that you closely follow the tips below:

- ☑ Access your department's NFIRS data for the past three years if possible.

- ☑ Analyze this data to determine if there are trends emerging.

- ☑ Identify staffing challenges in your department and surrounding departments to whom you provide mutual aid.

- ☑ Compile a demographic profile of your service area, including income and population statistics.

- ☑ Determine what your department needs are and if these needs are eligible for AFG funding. Secure a good cost estimate and make sure your department has sufficient funds to cover the AFG match.

- ☑ Review your department's budget, identify all sources of income and detail expenses.

- ☑ Know your SAM.gov registration information and DUNS number. If you have trouble with either of these, seek help before the application period opens. Make sure that the information contained in SAM and DUNS match each other and are same as the information contained in your FEMA profile.

- ☑ Save all of this information in one place so you can access it and update it easily. Back up this information on a thumb drive in case you work on the grant application on different computers or the original computer malfunctions.

Grant Administrative Requirements

The first steps your agency should take to get grant ready include:

- 📄 Identify the Legal Applicant

- 📄 Apply for, update, or verify the Legal Applicant's DUNS number

- 📄 Apply for, update, or verify the Legal Applicant's Employee Identification Number (EIN)

- 📄 Register, update, or verify the Legal Applicant's System for Award Management (SAM) account and entity registration

- 📄 Create or update your login to the FEMA Portal

Click on the links above to access the websites for each of the required administrative steps. Registration can take 3-4 weeks to complete so start early!

Is your organization eligible to apply for Federal Grants?

To submit an application to federal grant programs, it is important to identify and use the correct Legal Applicant. Federal Grants require that the Legal Applicant's information correlate with the DUNS registration and data contained in the SAM.gov Entity Profile. If this information does not match, you can jeopardize your chances at receiving a grant award!

How to determine the Legal Applicant

Fire and EMS departments typically fall into 3 categories: career, combination and volunteer. To identify the Legal Applicant for your FEMA Application, ask the following questions:

- What entity has final control over the department budget? This is typically a city/town council, board of commissioners or other organization type.

- What entity pays the agency's bills, operating expenses, salaries and/or stipends?

- Which entity owns the major equipment or vehicle titles? Are they responsible for large purchases and fund maintenance expenses for your department?

Depending on your agency type, the Legal Applicant may be different than your department name. This is OK! In most scenarios the department is not the direct Legal Applicant – the agency's governing body is listed as the Applicant on behalf of the department.

Here are typical examples of the Legal Applicant based on type of agency:

- **Career**: Municipality/local government/fire district depending on organization structure

- **Combination**: This should be the city /local government/fire district responsible for paying salaries, benefits and operating costs

- **Volunteer**: Varies depending on the entity that controls the budget, pays the bills and owns the vehicles/ major equipment items. This can be the local government, fire district or volunteer fire department itself.

If you cannot identify the applicant or are unsure, check with the agency's treasurer or Finance Director for clarification! Using the 3 questions outlined above, they should be able to identify the correct entity.

Get Ready Guide
Turnout Gear

Getting Started

A successful grant application begins by reading the program guidelines, which are essentially the instructions for the grant process. FEMA now calls this document the Notice of Funding Opportunity or NOFO. This document will provide you with all the information concerning grant eligibility, program priorities, filing deadlines, and application assistance.

The next step is to determine your eligibility.

1. Is your organization eligible to apply for the grant?

2. Is your project eligible for funding under the guidelines?

3. Is the amount of funding that you need within the limits of the grant?

4. Are you authorized by your organization to file this application?

Once your eligibility has been determined, you must conduct a risk assessment of your service area and department. The assessment will be the basis of your grant application. This assessment will show trends that your department has been experiencing over the past three to five years. To initiate your assessment, you will need to develop a demographic profile of your coverage area and your department.

To start your profile, access the U S Census data at Census.gov. For every community in your first due area at a minimum you should know: population, median household income, per capita income, poverty rates and the value of a single-family home.

Then develop a list of the critical infrastructure in your first due area. This should include places like:

• Schools, large daycare facilities, medical facilities, nursing homes and assisted living complexes

• Chemical storage or manufacturing facilities

• Public utilities and communication sites

• Transportation infrastructure

• Large commercial and industrial sites

The next segment of the planning process involves an assessment of your department's equipment, PPE, and apparatus. Begin by examining your department's

fire reports for the past year. At a minimum look at the number and type of alarms you had, as well as any special circumstances that occurred. Compare this data to the past three to five years of alarms. Next examine your current inventory of turnout gear. Does it meet current standards? Have maintenance and repair costs negatively impacted your budget? Are they posing a safety hazard to your firefighters or the community?

All this data should give you a picture of your community and the factors that are impacting your delivery of services to your coverage area. This data will be extremely useful as you develop your application narratives.

Developing Your Application

Any project request that you make should be based on your department's risk assessment. Part of this assessment must include an evaluation of your PPE. AFG considers a complete set of structural or proximity PPE turnout gear to comprise these NFPA 1971- or 1976-compliant components: one pair of pants, one coat, one helmet, two hoods, one pair of boots, two pairs of gloves, one pair of suspenders, one pair of goggles.

Preparation for your grant application should include a complete inventory of your PPE. If you don't already have a system to identify gear, you should develop one to make your inventory and record keeping easier. The tag inside the turnout gear should tell you the gear's date of manufacture. For AFG purposes this is the gear's "birthday". This is the date you use for your inventory. Do not use the date you assigned it to the firefighter or the date your department acquired it.

After Your Inventory

After your inventory is completed you should know the age and condition of your department's turnout gear. You should know if you have enough turnout gear to equip every member that answers alarms. This will assist you as you answer questions in the Applicant Information and Request Details sections of your AFG application and it will also help you to develop your narrative sections.

- Make sure that the number of firefighters you list under Applicant Information agrees with your turnout gear inventory. In other words, don't list 22 firefighters and 29 sets of gear. The computer review of your application will read this as a surplus and jeopardize the advancement of your application to peer review.

- Do you have assigned gear for each firefighter or do you operate from a grab rack? If you operate from a grab rack, how is this affecting the safety of your personnel or your response time?

- Does the age and condition of your gear meet current NFPA Standards?

- Have any of your firefighters suffered any injuries because of the condition of your gear? This can be cuts, bruises or minor burns that they suffered either during firefighting activities or during training.

- Were any of your firefighters denied "hands on" training because of the condition of your gear?

- Has the condition of your gear negatively affected the number of firefighters answering alarms, especially automatic and mutual aid calls?

- Do not apply to replace gear that is less than 10 years old, unless it is damaged and unsafe to wear. AFG will not consider it for replacement.

- Do not apply for turnout gear for "future" members. Your turnout gear request cannot be made for firefighters that don't currently belong to your department but may join in the future.

- If you are not requesting training funds along with your PPE request, there is a question at the end of the Request Details section that asks if you will seek training elsewhere. You must answer this question "Yes" or you will receive a negative score during technical review.

Always allow sufficient time to work on your application and remember to have someone else read your application before submission.

NEW For 2017

Rainy Day Funds

2017 AFG will feature a few changes from previous applications. This year, when asked if their department has "any capital reserve funds or rainy-day funds," if you answer "Yes," you will be given the opportunity to explain what that fund is used for. Many departments have capital reserve funds but they are restricted and can be used only for projects like a new station or a new piece of apparatus. By telling the reviewers this information, it lets them know that these funds are restricted and can't be used to purchase new turnout gear for the department. In other cases, a municipally controlled department may find itself in a situation where the municipality has reserve funds but they are dedicated to water or street improvement projects and not available to the fire department at all.

New Risks

Also, this year, under the Request Details section of your application, you will be asked if the reason you are requesting turnout gear is to meet a new risk. If you answer "Yes," you will be asked to explain the new risk in a short paragraph. A new risk can be a new factory or other types of industrial or commercial developments in your coverage area. It can be an increase in call volume, especially structure fires. Large festivals, athletic events or other types of gatherings would also fall into this definition. It can also be other special circumstances that you now can relay to the reviewer to make a case for your PPE request.

Inventory Matrix

Additionally, in 2017 the inventory matrix in Request Details section of the application will be different. In the past, the inventory matrix had a listing for members without gear. Beginning this year, the new matrix will not have a column for members without gear. If you are requesting to replace old obsolete turnout gear for existing members, that inventory information will be indicated in this matrix as done in the past. Complete the rest of the questions under PPE details.

If you are also requesting turnout gear for members that currently do not have PPE, you must go back and complete an additional Request Details PPE Details for the members without gear. However, when asked the reason for your request, your answer will be to purchase equipment for the first time since these firefighters currently do not have gear.

For 2017 see the following example.

AGE	CURRENT INVENTORY	BEING REPLACED
Less than 1		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25 or more		

Regional Projects

Departments have realized that it may be beneficial for them to apply for turnout gear jointly, in a regional application, rather than as individual departments. A Regional Application is an opportunity for two or more fire departments to collaborate on a PPE project that benefits all the applicants and their coverage areas. Departments have developed regional applications to allow them to achieve programs that would not have been competitive as an individual department and to allow them to achieve a cost savings on such a project. Regional program activities should achieve cost effectiveness, support regional efficiency and resilience, and benefit more than one local department.

Under regional activities one department must agree to act as the host for the application. As such, the host department must agree, if awarded, to be responsible for all aspects of the grant. This includes, but is not limited to, accountability for all assets received through the grant and all reporting requirements in the Regional Application.

All participants in a Regional Application must execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed by all parties participating in the application, prior to submission of the application. The MOU should specify the responsibilities of the participating partners, the participant's level of involvement in the project, 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 must have signed the MOU.

In the Project Description narrative, the regional host department must include a list of all the departments that are participating in the proposed regional project. The narrative should also provide specific details fully explaining the distribution of any grant-funded acquisitions or grant-funded contracted services.

All departments participating in a regional application must be compliant with all AFG requirements, including being current with past grants, closeouts, and other reporting requirements. Upon notification by the AFG Program Office, the host agency will not distribute grant-funded assets or provide grant-funded contractual services to non-compliant partner organizations.

Ask for help!

There are plenty of resources to help answer questions. Here are three of the better ones:

AFG Program Help Desk
Contact the AFG Program Help Desk with questions or comments by calling 1-866-274-0960 or emailing firegrants@dhs.gov.

FireGrantsHelp.com
Register for free at FireGrantsHelp.com and learn about the various resources offered.

National Volunteer Fire Council
Submit a grant assistance request to the National Volunteer Fire Council and get linked to one of the NVFC's peer reviewers.

When contemplating a regional application, please remember that it is a collaborative effort among separate departments. If you are one department that has several stations, your application to AFG is not considered a regional application. In a similar fashion, if you are a county-wide fire department the application for AFG funding for assets that benefit several of your stations is not a regional application.

When completing an AFG regional application, the host department will complete the Applicant Information section utilizing only its own department information. However, when completing the Department Characteristics section, the regional host applicant must include data that approximates the characteristics of all eligible organizations participating in the grant. In addition, when completing the Request Details section, the host must base their answers on the region and not their individual department. The same is true of the Narrative section of the application. When calculating the required match for a regional grant, the host should use the total population served by all departments involved in the regional application.

Break through the AFG grants process.

Is your DUNS and SAM registration up to date?
Do you know what you need to prepare for the AFG application?

If the answer is "No", contact the FireGrantsHelp team today!

Resources

How to not sabotage your fire grant application

Firefighting grants: How to land non-AFG funding

Assistance to Firefighters Grant 2016 Frequently Asked Questions

FY 2016 AFG Application Assistance Tools

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