



Assistance to Firefighters Grants

Recovery Act Plan
May 15, 2009



Homeland
Security

*Federal Emergency Management Agency Grant
Programs Directorate*

Message from the Component Accountable Official

I am pleased to transmit the FEMA Assistance to Firefighter Grants program plan as required by the implementation guidance from the Office of Management and Budget. The plan was prepared by FEMA's Grant Programs Directorate, as the proponent and awarding authority for this grant program.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 (Public Law 111-05) provided the Department of Homeland Security with \$210,000,000 to fund the construction and modification of fire stations. The program will be administered by the Assistance to Firefighters Program Office under FEMA's Grant Programs Directorate. The grants under this new program will be awarded directly to the fire departments on a competitive basis.

In creating this new program, the Assistance to Firefighters Program Office utilized the established process employed for all other grant opportunities. DHS involved the nine major fire service organizations to obtain insight and expertise providing funding priority recommendations. Applications will be submitted via the automated e-grant application. The submitted applications will be screened using the answers to the questions in the application to determine which applications will go to panel. Finally, a panel of peers will review each application sent to panel and provide recommendations regarding which applications will be funded.

This funding will provide relief to communities impacted by unemployment and poverty and will play a crucial role in helping to get our economy back on track and families back on their feet.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Farmer
Acting Director, Office of Policy and Program Analysis
Federal Emergency Management Agency

Executive Summary

Congress appropriated a total of \$210 million to implement the activities of the FY 2009 Assistance to Firefighters Station Construction Grants (SCG) Program. Grants awarded under the SCG shall be to a variety of fire departments, including, paid, volunteer and combination fire departments; fire departments located in communities of varying sizes; and fire departments located in urban, suburban and rural communities. This program also allows for up to 5% of the amount to be used by FEMA for Management & Administration (M&A) of the program. FEMA/GPD will submit a spend plan for up to 5% through the appropriate channels when finalized.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) directs DHS to limit the funding for any one grant to \$15.0 million per award. In order to maximize the benefits of the stimulus funding, DHS will also impose a \$5.0 million funding limitation on each project within an application. There is no limit to the number of projects that can be included in an application as long as no one project exceeds the \$5.0 million limit and the total request does not exceed the \$15.0 million limit. In instances where an applicant submits a request with multiple projects, each project will be considered in all levels of the evaluation of the application – preliminary review, the panel review, and the subsequent technical reviews.

The SCG Program is an important part of the Administration's larger, coordinated effort to stimulate the economy while strengthening homeland security preparedness. The National Preparedness Guidelines, which comprise an all-hazards vision regarding the Nation's four core preparedness objectives: prevent, protect, respond and recover from both terrorist attacks and catastrophic natural disasters, and their associated work products are of particular significance.

The National Preparedness Guidelines define a vision of accomplishment, and provide a set of tools to forge a unified national consensus about what to do and how to work together at all levels of government in order to effectively respond to all hazards. First responder participation is paramount to the Guidelines' success. DHS expects its first responder partners to be familiar with the National Preparedness Guidelines, and to consider these guidelines when assessing their needs and developing their grant requests.



Firefighter Assistance Grants Recovery Act Plan

Table of Contents

I.	Legislative Requirement	1
II.	Objectives.....	1
III.	Activities	1
IV.	Characteristics.....	2
V.	Delivery Schedule.....	2
VI.	Environmental Review Compliance and Federal Infrastructure Investments	3
VII.	Measures	6
VIII.	Monitoring/Evaluation.....	8
IX.	Transparency.....	8
X.	Accountability.....	8
XI.	Barriers to Effective Implementation.....	8
XII.	Appendix – Grant Guidance.....	9

I. Legislative Requirement

This document responds to the reporting requirements set forth in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (P.L. 111-4), which states in part:

Federal Emergency Management Agency
State and Local programs

For an additional amount for competitive grants, \$210,000,000 for modifying, upgrading, or constructing non-Federal fire stations: *Provided*, That up to 5 percent shall be for program administration: *Provided further*, That no grant shall exceed \$15,000,000.

SEC. 603. Subparagraph (E) of section 34(a)(1) of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. 2229a(a)(1)(E)) shall not apply with respect to funds appropriated in this or any other Act making appropriations for fiscal year 2009 or 2010 for grants under such section 34.

In addition, OMB Memorandum 09-15 provides guidance for the implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds.

II. Objectives

The purpose of SCG is to strategically increase the safety of the firefighters and the communities they serve. As such, all program priorities focus on the timeliness of the implementation of the construction project, the effect the new or modified facility will have on the health and safety of the firefighters, the number of firehouses in the surrounding area, as well as the benefit the new or modified facility will have on the protection of the community.

Since one of the priorities of the ARRA is to stimulate the economy by providing jobs, DHS will provide high consideration to departments serving communities that have suffered the highest increases in joblessness rates. To assess this criterion, the change in the joblessness rates from 2007 to 2008 in the county or community will be compared.

III. Activities

While the type of the project is not considered (i.e., DHS will not differentiate between new construction and modifications), the *purpose* of the construction or modification will have a bearing on the award determination. In this regard, the ARRA SCG Program has two, equally high priorities:

- 1) To replace unsafe or uninhabitable structures regardless of whether the project calls for the construction of a new building or the rehabilitation of an existing structure. Applicants

claiming unsafe or uninhabitable structures may be required to provide documentation regarding the nature of the health or safety deficiencies. Any health-code violations or orders to vacate unsafe structures must pre-date the enactment of the ARRA for consideration.

2) To fund projects expanding fire protection coverage to meet increased service demand in compliance with NFPA 1710 or 1720. In these instances, expanding fire protection coverage under a community's capital improvement plan will receive higher consideration than expansion projects not engaged in capital improvement planning.

A third priority is to fund projects modifying or expanding existing structures to provide sleeping quarters and/or amenities for full-time occupancy (to allow for habitation 24 hours per day). A fourth, slightly lower, priority is to fund modifying or expanding existing structures to accommodate support functions such as communications. The fifth and lowest priority is to fund projects replacing or expanding habitable structures that are cramped or inefficiently configured for operation.

FEMA and DHS will provide the highest consideration to fire departments that own or have otherwise already acquired the land where they plan to construct or modify their fire station. We also will provide the highest consideration to requests where the applicant's land is already zoned for the new or modified structure and where the applicants have already obtained the permits for their project including environmental assessments. However, no preference is given to requests for constructing new stations or to requests for modifying/improving stations already in existence.

To select which communities will receive SCG funds, DHS will review applications and a panel of peer reviewers will evaluate each application and provide a subjective but qualitative judgment on the merits of each request. Panelists will evaluate and score the applications based on project description, financial need, cost/benefit analysis, and effect on daily operations.

Each application that scores high during the peer review process will be deemed in the fundable range. Applications in the fundable range will undergo a series of Technical Reviews prior to being recommended for award. After the Technical Review, the program office will conduct an additional review to assess the request with respect to eligibility prior to recommending the application for award.

Further information on the grant selection process may be found in the Appendix.

IV. Characteristics

- These funds will be awarded in the form of grants
 - a. Project Grants (Code B).
- All awards will be competitive in nature

V. Delivery Schedule

Delivery Schedule for the AFG grant under ARRA:

- February 17 – May 20, 2009: FEMA/GPD reaches out to stakeholders to solicit input on how the funding priorities and rating criteria for the grants should be structured. This outreach portion is a key component of Secretary Napolitano’s strategy for integrating our state and local partners into the DHS processes;
- May 21, 2009: Release of guidance package;
- July 2, 2009 – September 29, 2009: Receipt of applications and expedited peer review process;
- October 15, 2009 – December 31, 2009: Awards announced and processed on a rolling basis. Please note that from mid-September to mid-October, all financial systems within DHS must be shut down to reconcile obligations. As well, OMB must reappropriation grant monies back to FEMA after the first of the fiscal year, so this will cause delays in grant awards;

VI. Environmental Review Compliance and Federal Infrastructure Investments

Each eligible application received under the Station Construction Grants Program will be reviewed for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act, among other requirements prior to the application approval and release of grant funds. Grant Program guidance to be released for the FY 2009 ARRA SCG will notify potential applicants that FEMA will need detailed project information with regard to these requirements, particularly for construction projects. Where potential grantees may need to incur costs to provide detailed information regarding these requirements, planning funds may be released to fund the information gathering.

Consultation may be required with other Federal and State agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State Historic Preservation Offices, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as well as other agencies and organizations responsible for protecting natural and cultural resources. For projects with the potential to have significant adverse effects on the environment and/or historic properties, the compliance process may result in an agreement between the involved parties outlining how the grantee will avoid, minimize, or, if necessary, mitigate the effects. Failure of a grant recipient to meet these requirements may jeopardize Federal funding.

Any construction activities initiated without the necessary EHP review and approval will result in a noncompliance finding and ineligibility for SCG funding.

ARRA also added additional reporting requirements for environmental compliance and sustainability. The two excel spreadsheets will be added to the applicable grant guidance, and grantees will be required to complete the information before funds can be expended.

ARRA ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

	<i>Project Data</i>				
	1	2	3	4	5
PROJECT NAME					
ARRA Unique ID Number					
Project Objective					
Project Description					
ELECTRONIC PRODUCT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT TOOL (EPEAT)					
Bronze					
Silver					
Gold					
Non EPEAT purchases where EPEAT products were available					
ENERGY STAR PRODUCTS					
Quantity					
Costs					
Non Energy Star purchases where Energy Star products were available (Quantity)					
Non Energy Star purchases where Energy Star products were available (Costs)					
FEMP LABELED/APPROVED PRODUCTS					
Quantity					
Costs					
Non FEMP purchases where FEMP products were available (Quantity)					
Non FEMP purchases where FEMP products were available (Costs)					
GREEN PURCHASING					
Recycled content products					
USDA designated biobased products					

Alternative fuels					
Environmentally Preferable Products					
Hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles					
Non-ozone depleting substances					
Renewable Energy					

Requirement Met (explain how) Certified
Requirement Met (explain how) Silver
Requirement Not Met (explain why) Gold
Requirement Not Met (explain why) Platinum

ARRA SUSTAINABLE

	<i>Project Data</i>				
	1	2	3	4	5
PROJECT NAME					
ARRA Unique ID Number					
Project Objective					
Project Description					
SUSTAINABILITY REQUIREMENTS- apply to all construction, renovations, and leases					
Employ Integrated Design Principles	Requirement Not Met (explain why)				
Optimize Energy Performance	Requirement Met (explain how)				
Protect and Conserve Water	Requirement Met (explain how)				
Enhance Indoor Environmental Quality	Requirement Met (explain how)				
Reduce Environmental Impact of Materials	Requirement Met (explain how)				

ENERGY REQUIREMENTS- apply to all construction and renovations					
Energy Efficient Buildings	Requirement Met (explain how)				
Energy Efficient Capital Equipment					
Metering					
Solar Hot Water					
LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (LEED)					
Registration goal					
Registration attained					
LEED POINTS EARNED					
LEED points goal					
LEED points attained					
Site credits					
Indoor Air Quality					
Materials					
Water					
Energy					
Innovation					

VII. Measures

The following performance measures will be used for the ARRA- Fire Station Construction Grants and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grants (SAFER), administered through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. The results of these measures will be posted quarterly or weekly, see below on the AFG website at (www.firegrantsupport.com). In addition, the Annual Performance Report published by DHS demonstrates performance measure results and is available to the public on the DHS website (www.dhs.gov).

ARRA – Non-Federal Fire Station Construction Grants and SAFER Grants		
Measure #1	Measure	Number of non-Federal fire station construction and modification grants awarded (will be reported weekly, as awards are issued)
	Description	This data set consists of application and award report data. Supporting data is derived from application and award report data generated, maintained and retrieved within the AFG e-grant system.
	Data Collection Methodology	AFG reviews rank scored applications and makes recommendations for awards. The application data as well as the award report data is captured, maintained and retrieved from the e-grant system.

Measure #2	Measure	Number of individual modification and construction projects (will be reported weekly, as awards are issued).
	Description	This data set consists of project information submitted via the grant applications and captured in the e-grant system. Analysis of the proposed projects and types (i.e., modification, new construction) as determined by the scope of the project.
	Data Collection Methodology	All information associated with grant application submittals is retrievable from the e-grant system and is reviewed by AFG staff. Application data relative to the type of project will be compiled from the e-grant system.
Measure #3	Measure	Total number of labor-hours associated with the implementation of construction/modification projects.
	Description	This data set consists of quarterly performance data submitted via the AFG e-grant system. Grantees are required to submit data regarding man-hours associated with all aspects of project implementation (e.g., architectural services, EHP compliance services, construction).
	Data Collection Methodology	The AFG e-grant system maintains all submitted quarterly performance data. Grant specific data relative to labor-hours associated with specific projects is captured.
Measure #4	Measure	Number of SAFER grants awarded (will be reported weekly, as awards are issued).
	Description	This data set consists of award data generated and maintained in the AFG e-grants system.
	Data Collection Methodology	AFG reviews rank scored applications and makes recommendations for awards. The application data as well as the award report data is captured, maintained and retrieved from the e-grant system.
Measure #5	Measure	Number of sustained firefighter positions at time of award and newly funded firefighter positions post award (will be reported weekly, as awards are issued).
	Description	This data set consists of information derived from application and quarterly grant reports that are submitted and maintained via the AFG e-grant system.
	Data Collection Methodology	AFG e-grant system maintains all application data and quarterly reports. AFG reviews and approves all quarterly reports. Staffing levels at time of application and award in addition to newly created positions are captured and reported.

VIII. Monitoring/Evaluation

Grant recipients' projects will be monitored periodically by DHS staff, both programmatically and financially, to ensure the project goals, objectives, performance requirements, timelines, milestone completion, budgets and other related program criteria are met. Monitoring will be accomplished through a combination of office-based reviews and on-site monitoring visits. In addition, it will involve the review and analysis of the financial, programmatic, performance and administrative issues relative to each project. It will also identify areas where technical assistance and other support are needed.

IX. Transparency

FEMA will continue to collect both programmatic and financial information via the standard financial status report and the semi-annual progress report that is located in FEMA's AFG reporting system.

X. Accountability

FEMA Grant Programs Directorate will be directly responsible for the timely application and obligation of these funds.

Our specific plans to meet the following objectives are as follows:

- Funds Obligated Timely: FEMA plans to obligate 100% of the grant funds to recipients by the end of the first quarter of FY 10;
- Funds Expended Timely: FEMA will work with all AFG recipients to ensure a 100% expenditure rate within the 36-month performance period of the grant;
- Competitive Opportunities Maximized: FEMA will compete 100% of the AFG grant dollars;
- Undelivered Orders Minimized: N/A

XI. Barriers to Effective Implementation

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program is an existing program within FEMA's Grant Programs Directorate, and the ARRA funding will utilize the existing framework to deliver grant guidance and make awards. However, construction activities are not currently allowable (to this extent) in the existing program. As such, significant changes need to be made to the online application system and those changes could take longer than May 21st to make. In order to mitigate this problem, GPD intends to release the guidance on the planned schedule, but may have to delay the opening of the online system for a few days. This may also extend the application period.

XII. Appendix – Grant Guidance

Applications most consistent with the grant funding priorities score higher than applications that are inconsistent with the priorities. Applications scoring the highest are determined to be in the “competitive range” and undergo further evaluation through a peer review process. DHS will review a sufficient number of applications in order to assure that the SCG Program’s goals and objectives are met. To achieve this, the number of applications reviewed will be the number of applications whose cumulative requests equates to no less than 200 percent (200%) of the appropriated funding for SCG. As such, with \$210 million appropriated for SCG, DHS will consider no less than \$420 million in applications to be in the competitive range and reviewed by a panel of peers.

A panel of at least three peer reviewers evaluates each application scoring in the competitive range from the first phase of evaluation using the project narrative and the specific project details provided by the applicant. During the panel review process, panelists provide a subjective but qualitative judgment on the merits of each request.

Panelists evaluate and score the following project elements:

1) Project Description:

- The narrative should demonstrate the need for the new facility. This would include a description of the existing facility or facilities and their shortcomings.
- Why are you building a new station versus expanding or modifying your existing station (or vice versa)? Provide a basis for site selection for the new construction.
- Describe your construction project.
- What is the current status of the project? Describe where you are in the process. Have you obtained plans, permits, etc.?
- What are the characteristics of the project? How many square feet? How many bays/vehicles? What other accommodations will be included such as a kitchen, training, decontamination area, power source, gender specific sleeping quarters, training space, day room or community meeting space?
- What are the budgeted costs associated/estimated for each section?

2) Financial Need:

- What efforts have been employed to generate funds for the construction? Describe the number and types of events.
- How long have the efforts to generate funds for the new station been ongoing?
- Have you applied for or obtained other grants or sources of funding? Have the fund-raising efforts been unsuccessful or declining?
- Have you obtained but lost partial grants due to inability to fund an entire project?
- Describe your local community’s economic situation, including unemployment and poverty levels.

3) Cost/Benefit:

- What, if any, will be the level of local contribution compared to overall costs?
- How will firefighters be safer with the new station (if applicable)?
- How will the new/modified station improve your response capabilities? Do you have the ability to expand service from new structure?
- What is the population served (overall population as well as population served by new station)?
- What types of incidents will be handled from the new structure?
- What is proximity to mutual aid partners?
- What “green” elements do you plan on incorporating into the station?
- Describe any other tangential uses that will add to the benefits.

4) Effect on Daily Operations:

- Describe the increased response effectiveness due to new proximity to population.
- What is the anticipated call volume from the new station?
- What assurances can you provide that the new station will be staffed/equipped so fire suppression services are not compromised (not stretched too thin to benefit the community)?

Each of these elements carries equal weight when factored into the panelists’ scores (*i.e.*, one-fourth).

Each application is judged on its own merits, not compared to other applications. The panelists consider all expenses budgeted, including administrative and/or indirect costs, as part of the cost-benefit review. Panelists review each application in its entirety and rate the application according to the established evaluation criteria.

DHS will use the answers to the activity-specific questions as well as other information in the application when conducting initial assessments. The answers to these questions are the primary basis for determining whether an application warrants further evaluation through peer review. Applicants whose answers indicate their project is consistent with the established priorities (as outlined in Section 1.C above) have a better chance of scoring within the competitive range and reaching the second level of evaluation, e.g., the peer review, than those applicants whose projects do not reflect the established priorities. Applicants who submit false information with their applications or misrepresent their organizations in any material manner will have their applications deemed ineligible by the AFG Program Office and referred to the DHS’ OIG for further action, as appropriate.

Technical Review Process

Each application that scores high during the peer review process will be deemed in the fundable range. Applications in the fundable range undergo series of Technical Reviews by subject matter

specialists as well as a Program Office review prior to being recommended for award. In the Technical Review, subject matter specialists will assess the technical feasibility of the applicants achieving the benefits claimed in their applications. We will also have a construction specialist perform a detailed review of the proposed budget as well as conformance to accepted engineering practices (codes, standards, modeling, techniques, or best practices). After the Technical Review, the Program Office will conduct an additional review to assess the request with respect to eligibility prior to recommending the application for award.