

AN INSIDERS GUIDE

How to Write a Successful Fire Grant

eso

OUR INDUSTRY INSIDER



RANK Fire Chief

FUNDING RECEIVED Over \$4.5 Million

GRANT EXPERIENCE

Over the past 17 years, our insider has participated in multiple fire grant writing programs by submitting, receiving, and managing grants, and has successfully received grant funding in excess of \$4.5 million over the last 5 years. Additionally, this insider has worked with grant reviewers, as well as the groups that help to identify prioritization and create the processes for grants. Successful in both the public safety and private foundation grants, they agreed to give us a look behind the scenes of fire grants to help give you a better shot at submitting a successful application.

You want to run a high performing fire department while keeping your crews and the public safe, but after constant repairs on your equipment and gear, and being understaffed most shifts, you decide that it's time to look into a grant. You discover that the three most popular firefighter grants are:

- Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) programs which helps with attaining equipment, PPE, training, vehicles, and other resources.
- Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grants which focuses on the staffing and training of frontline firefighters.
- Fire Prevention and Safety Grants which supports projects centering around the safety of the public and firefighters from fire and related hazards.

Since you have never applied for a grant before, you do some research on these three grants and find a slew of helpful information. But what you can't find are helpful pointers that prepare you for what you don't know. Because as the saying goes – you don't know what you don't know! Ensure you are fully prepared and submit a successful application with these ten critical, must-know tips.

TIP 1

Complete the FEMA self-evaluation to identify what you really need.

Each grant is different and has its own eligibilities, so in order to know which grant you should apply for, it is essential to first pinpoint where you need the assistance by filling out a self-evaluation such as this one for hiring through the SAFER Grants.

TIP 2

Know the rules by reading the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Everything you need to know about the grant you are applying for is in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). As an example, the SAFER NOFO provides you with information such as eligibility, priorities, dates, available funding amount, and other critical information you must know. Read through this document with a fine-tooth comb.

TIP 3

Apply for items that are a high priority.

The NOFO states the high priority items, as well as what qualifies you as a high priority department. For instance, firefighter recruitment and retention could be one of FEMA's high priorities in a particular year, and after you analyze your data, you discover you are currently compliant with NFPA 1710/1720 only 10% of the time. If hiring 15 firefighters changes your compliance to be 80-90% of the time - this will make your application a higher priority.

TIP 4

Attend a meeting or webinar hosted by FEMA about the grant you are applying for.

Take advantage of having the ability to ask questions live! These meetings and webinars can help clarify what you don't understand and uncover details you may not have known.

TIP 5

Complete the FEMA checklist before you start the grant application.

A grant checklist shows you exactly what you need before you start your application. The checklist also calls out exact data you need to pull from your RMS, which is grant-specific. With ESO Fire Incidents, ESO Analytics is built in, making documenting and gathering data easy.

INSIDER SCOOP

"Documenting is crucial to the success of your grant so make sure you are staying on top of your checklist to have all the required information prepared before applying."

TIP 6

Get a letter of support for the remaining funding from your governing body to submit with your application.

Get support from your local governing body to ensure a better chance at receiving a grant. Many grants will only fulfill a certain percentage of your grant request, so it is up to you to be aware of award amounts and to meet with your governing body to ensure their support by agreeing to fund the remaining percentage. For instance, if you are applying to receive \$100,000 and FEMA covers 75% that particular year, your governing body must provide the remaining 25%.

INSIDER SCOOP

"If you get the support from your local governing body, they may have certain requirements that you need to fulfill, so be sure to understand those."

TIP 7

Write your narratives in a word processing document first, then paste them into the application.

To avoid system time-outs in the middle of writing your narratives, use a word processing tool to write out your answers to any open-ended questions prior to beginning the application. There's nothing quite like getting halfway through an application only to have it time out on you. Just copy, paste, and move on.

TIP 8

Remember that the person reviewing applications is likely in the fire service, so be succinct, factual, and show what you are trying to solve.

Every reviewer will have a large stack of applications to read through, so it is in your best interest to write a clear and concise narrative, while also providing supporting data to tell your story.

INSIDER SCOOP

"FEMA's application system times out after 30 minutes. So, you need to make sure you answer all the questions in a section within that timeframe if you don't want to lose any of your work."

TIP 9

Do not wait until the last minute to submit your application!

Have you ever tried to order a product online during its big release, only to watch your internet browser spin for two hours and they sell out before your order goes through? Well, this same thing can happen to your application! The system can only handle so much and will not accept anything you try to submit past the deadline. So, if you try to submit your application at the last minute along with everyone else, you are jeopardizing the success of the submission.

TIP 10

Document with data – well before you consider applying.

Most grants require data going back several years prior to the funding date. You'll need to demonstrate your knowledge of current and previous performance with data from your NFIRS, occupancies, or other documentation and reporting systems. By ensuring your data fields and submissions are accurate and compliant, you'll be headed down the right path for grant funding.

INSIDER SCOOP

"If you receive funding, that's not the end of your clean and accurate documentation. You need to continue filling out your incident reports and doing proper documentation because your grant organization may require you to report back to them over time on KPI's, outcomes, and other data points."

NOW WHAT?

Applying for a fire grant can seem overwhelming, but it is worth it. Preparation and understanding expectations are key to a successful application. Now that you've read these insider tips and have additional insight, preparing your grant application just became a little easier.

ABOUT ESO

ESO is dedicated to improving community health and safety through the power of data. Since its founding in 2004, the company continues to pioneer innovative, user-friendly software to meet the changing needs of today's EMS agencies, fire departments, and hospitals. For more information, visit [eso.com](https://www.eso.com).