

Fiscal Year 2025 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grant Program Fact Sheet

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Program will make available \$324 million to fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations to assist in increasing the number of frontline firefighters.

Overview

The FY 2025 SAFER Program is one of three grant programs that constitute the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) focus on enhancing the safety of the public and firefighters with respect to fire and related hazards. Since FY 2005, FEMA has awarded approximately \$6.1 billion in grant funding through the SAFER Program to provide critically needed resources to hire new, additional firefighters (or to change the status of part-time or paid-on-call firefighters to full-time firefighters). FEMA will award another \$324 million in FY 2025 SAFER Program funds to an estimated 190 eligible fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations. This funding will assist fire departments in increasing the number of firefighters to meet industry minimum standards and attain 24-hour staffing to provide adequate fire protection from fire and fire-related hazards. For more information, see Section 1 of the FY 2025 SAFER Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

Purpose

The purpose of the SAFER Program is to provide grants directly to eligible fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations to assist with staffing and deployment capabilities to respond to emergencies. Using a competitive process designed, reviewed, and overseen by fire service subject-matter experts, FEMA awards grants to applicants whose requests best address the priorities of the SAFER Program.

Funding

The Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025, Pub. L. No. 119-4, § 1101, appropriated \$324 million to carry out the activities of the SAFER Grant Program. The statute, 15 U.S.C. § 2229a, authorizes the SAFER Grant Program to make competitive grants to fire departments and national, state, local, tribal and nonprofit interest organizations representing the interests of volunteer firefighters. No less than 10% of the funding must be awarded to projects under the Recruitment and Retention (R&R) Activity, and 10% of the funding is set aside for awards to volunteer or mostly volunteer fire departments under the Hiring of Firefighters (Hiring) Activity. For more information, see Section 12.D. of the FY 2025 SAFER Program NOFO.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants for the FY 2025 SAFER Program include fire departments and national, state, local, tribal, and nonprofit interest organizations operating in any of the 50 states, as well as fire departments in the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico¹, or any federally recognized Tribal Nation or tribal organization. For more information on eligibility, please see Sections 2.A. and 2.B. of the FY 2025 SAFER Program NOFO.

Definitions

- A **fire department** is an agency or organization that has a formally recognized arrangement with a state, territory, local government, or tribal authority (city, county, parish, fire district, township, town, village or other governing body) to provide fire suppression on a first-due basis to a fixed geographical area.
- A **national, state, local, tribal, and non-profit interest organization** is an organization that supports or represents the interests of firefighters in front of legislative bodies at the local, state, tribal and/or federal level. Such organizations include state or local firefighter and/or fire chiefs' associations, and volunteer firefighter relief organizations and associations.
- A **career fire department** is a fire department that has an all-paid force of firefighting personnel other than paid-on-call firefighters (fire departments that provide reimbursement on a paid-on-call basis are considered to be a “combination fire department” for the purposes of the FY 2025 SAFER Program).
- A **combination fire department** is a fire department that has paid firefighting personnel and volunteer firefighting personnel. A combination fire department must have at least one active firefighter who receives financial compensation for their services (including paid-on-call) and at least one active firefighter who does not receive financial compensation for services, other than life, health and workers’ compensation insurance.
 - FEMA considers a department to be majority volunteer if more than 50% of its membership is made up of personnel who do not receive financial compensation for their services.
 - FEMA considers a department to be majority career if more than 50% of the active firefighting membership is salaried staff.
- A **volunteer fire department** is a fire department that has an all-volunteer force of firefighting personnel. To be an all-volunteer force, no member may receive financial compensation (in the form of salary or wages) for their services, except for life and health insurance, workers’ compensation insurance, and/or a nominal stipend per call.

¹ The District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico are all defined as “States” in the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974.

Allowable Activities

Under the FY 2025 SAFER Program, eligible organizations may apply for grants for the following activities:

Recruitment and Retention Activity

- Assist fire departments with the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters who are involved with or trained in the operations of firefighting and emergency response.

Hiring Activity

- Hire new, additional firefighters (or to change the status of part-time or paid-on-call firefighters to full-time firefighters).

Application Process and Evaluation Criteria

FEMA reviews SAFER Program applications through a multi-phase process. All complete and eligible applications are electronically pre-scored and ranked based on the substance of the application relative to the established funding priorities. Applications will then undergo further evaluation by a peer review panel, composed of individuals from the fire service and volunteer firefighter interest organizations.

Peer review panelists evaluate the applications using the narrative statement, answers to general questions, and answers to activity-specific questions. Each application is judged on its own merits against established criteria and is not compared to other applications.

Applications most consistent with the established SAFER Program funding priorities that score the highest and are determined to be in the “competitive range” will undergo a Technical Review by the FEMA Program Office, which will assess the request with respect to costs, quantities, feasibility, eligibility, and recipient responsibility. For more information, see Sections 7.F. and 7.G. of the FY 2025 SAFER Program NOFO.

Program Coordination

The following entities were involved in developing the FY 2025 SAFER Program guidance:

DHS

- FEMA
- U.S. Fire Administration

Major Fire Service Organizations

- International Association of Fire Chiefs
- International Association of Fire Fighters
- National Volunteer Fire Council

- National Fire Protection Association
- National Association of State Fire Marshals
- International Association of Arson Investigators
- International Society of Fire Service Instructors
- North American Fire Training Directors
- Congressional Fire Services Institute

SAFER Program Resources

For additional information on the FY 2025 SAFER Program, please visit our website at:

<https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/firefighters/safer/documents>.

You may also contact the Fire Grants Program Help Desk at (866) 274-0960 or firegrants@fema.dhs.gov. The help desk is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. E.T.

Fiscal Year 2025 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Program Frequently Asked Questions

This document addresses Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) related to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Program. Applicants should refer to the FY 2025 SAFER Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for full details and application requirements.

General Program Questions

What is the purpose of the SAFER Program?

The program's purpose is to provide funding directly to fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations (interest organizations) to assist with increasing the number of firefighters to help communities meet industry minimum standards, to attain 24-hour staffing to provide adequate protection from fire and fire-related hazards, and to fulfill traditional missions of fire departments. The SAFER Program is separated into two activities: Hiring of Firefighters (Hiring) Activity and Recruitment and Retention (R&R) Activity. Using a competitive process that designed, reviewed, and overseen by fire service subject-matter experts, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will award grants in both activities to applicants whose requests best address the priorities of the FY 2025 SAFER Program.

What changes were made to the SAFER Program since last year?

The FY 2025 SAFER Program NOFO contains changes to definitions, descriptions, and priority categories, including:

- Under Supporting Definitions:
 - The terms Grant Administrator, Program Manager, and R&R Coordinator are defined.
 - The term Explorer, Cadet, or Mentoring Program is defined.
- Under Recruitment and Retention (R&R) Activity – Eligible Costs: Medium Priority:
 - Training supplies and nominal stipends are now eligible costs to support an explorer, cadet or mentoring program.
 - Medium Priority wellness program costs are not eligible unless paired with a request for a High Priority wellness and fitness cost (e.g. physicals). Eligible Medium Priority wellness program costs are also now limited to those described in the R&R Activity – Eligible Costs: Medium Priority table.
- Under Appendix C – Award Administration Information:

- Restrictions on the use of excess funds have been updated.

What do I need to know about Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation (EHP)?

SAFER Program projects that involve the installation of supplies/equipment not specifically excluded from a FEMA EHP Review, such as ground-disturbing activities, or modification/renovation of existing buildings or structures, will require an EHP review. Some equipment activities will require an EHP review, as well. Such activities include but are not limited to:

- Building renovations, such as removal of wall or installation of electrical or waterlines;
- Training/exercises in natural settings, such as rope or swift water;
- Installation of LED signs; and
- Any scope of work that involves ground disturbances.

Please see FEMA's EHP Screening form and instructions at [EHP Screening Form](#). EHP policy guidance can be found at [Preparedness Grants EHP Compliance webpage](#). Recipients will be notified of their EHP responsibilities in the grant award package.

Actions initiated and/or completed without fulfilling the specific EHP requirements will not be considered for funding.

Who is eligible to apply under the SAFER Program?

Eligible applicants for the program include fire departments; any federally recognized Tribal Nation or tribal organization; and national, regional, state, local, tribal and nonprofit interest organizations representing the interests of volunteer firefighters.

How do I determine whether I represent a volunteer, combination, or career fire department or a national, regional, state, local, tribal and nonprofit volunteer firefighter interest organization?

A **volunteer fire department**, as defined in 15 U.S.C. § 2229, has an all-volunteer force of firefighting personnel. For a fire department to have an all-volunteer force, no member may receive financial compensation (in the form of salary or wages) for their services other than life and health insurance, workers' compensation insurance, and/or a nominal stipend per call. For the purposes of this SAFER Program, a department whose membership is composed of all volunteer firefighters, including any paid-on-call firefighters who receive only a nominal stipend, will be considered a volunteer fire department.

A **career department**, as defined in 15 U.S.C. § 2229, has an all-paid force of firefighting personnel other than paid on-call firefighters. Fire departments that provide reimbursement on a paid-on-call basis are considered a combination fire department for the purposes of this program.

A **combination department**, as defined in 15 U.S.C. § 2229, has paid firefighting personnel and volunteer firefighting personnel. At a minimum, a combination fire department must have at least one active firefighter who receives financial compensation for services (including paid-on-call) and at least one active firefighter who does not receive financial compensation for services other than life, health and workers' compensation insurance.

For the purposes of this SAFER Program, a department whose membership is composed of any paid-on-call firefighters who receive more than a nominal stipend will be considered a combination fire department.

FEMA considers a department to be combination majority volunteer if more than 50% of its membership is made up of personnel who do not receive financial compensation for services. Departments are considered combination majority career if more than 50% of the active firefighting membership is salaried staff.

A **national, regional, state, local, tribal, and nonprofit volunteer firefighter interest organization** is defined as an organization that supports or represents the interests of firefighters in front of legislative bodies at the local, state, tribal and federal level. Such organizations include but are not limited to state or local firefighter and/or fire chiefs' associations, volunteer firefighter relief organizations, and associations. FEMA shall determine whether an applicant is an appropriate volunteer firefighter interest group under this program.

Fire departments applying for a regional grant on behalf of themselves and other participating fire departments are not considered interest organizations.

What activities may I apply for under the SAFER Program?

Applicants may apply for the two allowable activities under the SAFER Program:

Hiring Activity: Provides federal financial assistance to help fire departments hire new, additional firefighters (or change the status of part-time or paid-on-call firefighters to full-time firefighters). National, regional, state, local, tribal and nonprofit interest organizations are not eligible to apply for funding under the Hiring Activity.

R&R Activity: Assists volunteer and combination fire departments and national, regional, state, local, tribal, and nonprofit interest organizations with the recruitment and/or retention of volunteer firefighters who are involved with or trained in the operations of firefighting and emergency response. Career fire departments are not eligible to apply for funding under the R&R Activity.

How many applications may I submit?

Eligible applicants may submit only one application for each eligible activity under the SAFER Program (one under the Hiring Activity and/or one under the R&R Activity). Applicants interested in applying under both the Hiring Activity and the R&R Activity must submit a separate application for each activity. All submissions of duplicate applications will be disqualified.

Be sure to select the appropriate applicant type when applying. Applications differ based on the applicant type. For example, the Hiring Activity application differs from the fire department application for the R&R Activity; the R&R Activity application will be different for a fire department than an interest organization. Applications submitted under the wrong type (e.g., regional fire department R&R Activity application applied through the interest organization application) will be deemed ineligible.

I have an open SAFER Program award(s). May I still apply under the FY 2025 SAFER Program?

Yes. However, because the period of performance on the open grant award(s) and the FY 2025 grant period of performance could overlap, you need to ensure that the start of your FY 2025 grant does not depend on the completion of your open grant(s), or that receipt of a FY 2025 SAFER Program award will not impact your ability to continue with and/or complete your open grant award(s). The grant activities requested in the FY 2025 SAFER Program must supplement the current award(s) and cannot be for the same activities, expenditures, or personnel funded under the open grant award(s). Applicants with an active SAFER Program award who wish to apply under the FY 2025 SAFER Program are subject to the guidelines and requirements outlined in the FY 2025 SAFER Program NOFO.

How much funding is available under the FY 2025 SAFER Program?

The Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025, Pub. L. No. 119-4, § 1101 makes \$324 million available under the FY 2025 SAFER Program. Specific funding parameters are either required by law or are the outcome of recommendations from the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program Criteria Development Panel:

10% of the funding is set aside for grants awarded to all volunteer or majority volunteer departments for the hiring of firefighters.

If FEMA awards less than 10% of the funds available for the hiring of firefighters to volunteer and majority volunteer fire departments, it will transfer the remaining funds to provide grants for the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.

10% of the funding is set aside for the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.

No more than 33% of the total amount allocated for the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters can be awarded to national, regional, state, local, territorial, or tribal organizations that represent the interests of volunteer firefighters.

What is the maximum amount of funding a recipient may be awarded?

There is no maximum award amount for FY 2025 SAFER Program awards. However, it is important to note that all awarded SAFER Program costs and activities must be incurred, received and completed within the period of performance. Therefore, applicants should carefully consider what costs and activities they can reasonably accomplish within the period of performance.

Is there a cost share for all applicants?

For Hiring Activity grants, recipients are required to contribute 25% of the actual costs incurred in each of the first and second years of the grant; and 65% of the actual costs incurred in the third year of the grant.

In the first and second years of the grant, the amount of federal funding awarded may not exceed 75% of the usual annual cost of a first-year firefighter in that department at the time the grant application was submitted. In the third

year of the grant, the amount of federal funding may not exceed 35% of the usual annual cost of a first-year firefighter in that department.

The “usual annual cost” includes a firefighter’s base salary (excluding non-Fair Labor Standards Act overtime) and the standard benefits package offered by the fire department to first-year firefighters. Standard benefits include the average annual cost of health, dental and vision insurance; FICA; life insurance; retirement and/or pension contributions; etc.

For R&R Activity grants, there is no cost share requirement.

When will the awards be announced?

Award announcements will be made no later than September 30, 2026.

Successful recipients will be notified via email and through the FEMA Grants Outcomes (FEMA GO) system of their award offer. Recipients must accept their awards no later than 30 days from the award date. Recipients must accept their award in FEMA GO. Funds will remain on hold until the recipient accepts the award through the FEMA GO system and all other conditions of the award have been satisfied, or until the award is otherwise rescinded. Failure to accept a grant award within the specified timeframe may result in a loss of funds.

Recipients may request additional time to accept their award if needed.

When a SAFER Program award is accepted, when does the period of performance start?

The period of performance under the Hiring Activity is 36 months for all grants awarded. A default 180-day recruitment period, which allows grant recipients to begin hiring SAFER Program-funded firefighters, begins when FEMA approves the application for an award under this activity. The 36-month period of performance automatically starts after the 180-day recruitment period, regardless of whether the recipient has successfully hired the requested firefighters.

The period of performance under the R&R Activity is 12, 24, 36 or 48 months for all grants awarded. A default 90-day recruitment period, which allows recipients time to gather resources, initiate processes, and finalize contracts needed to implement SAFER Program grant activities, begins when FEMA approves the application for award under this activity. The period of performance automatically starts after the 90-day recruitment period ends, regardless of whether the recipient is ready to begin implementing its grant award.

Application Questions

What are some important reminders for FY 2025 SAFER Program application?

To submit a SAFER program application, the applicant organization must be currently registered and active in the System for Award Management (SAM) to apply. Applicants are advised that FEMA may not make a federal award until the applicant has complied with all applicable SAM requirements. Therefore, an applicant’s SAM registration

must be active not only at the time of application, but also during the application review period and when FEMA is ready to make a federal award. SAM is available from Grants.gov at <https://sam.gov/entity-registration>.

Additional information about UEI and FEMA GO is provided in the FEMA GO Startup Guide at: <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/181607>.

What is program income?

Although not common, recipients may generate income while carrying out grant-supported activities during the period of performance under the SAFER Program award. This is referred to as program income. This income can be used to defray program costs, where appropriate, consistent with 2 C.F.R. § 200.307. The Budget Summary section of the grant application contains a field for program income. The response should be \$0 unless the recipient anticipates generating program income during the period of performance. If the recipient plans to generate program income, it should be explained in the narrative. The FEMA GO application will not include program income estimates in the total budget. FEMA will review the program income submitted and adjust the budget as appropriate before award. Any program income must be used and managed in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.307.

What are Management and Administration (M&A) costs?

M&A costs are administrative expenses that are incurred during the administration of a SAFER Program award. Applicants may apply for M&A costs if the costs are directly related to the implementation of the program for which they are applying. Please note M&A costs are only eligible under the R&R activity and are not eligible under the Hiring Activity.

M&A costs are identifiable costs directly associated with the implementation and management of the grant and cannot exceed 3% of the federal share of SAFER Program funds awarded. If you are requesting M&A expenses, you must list the costs under the "Other" category in the budget and explain the purpose for the administrative costs in your Project Narrative. All M&A costs must be in accordance with 2 C.F.R. Part 200 Subpart E, Cost Principles, and should be based on actual expenses only, not a percentage of the overall grant.

Where do I submit the federally approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement?

Applicants with a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement that want to charge indirect costs to an award must provide a copy of their negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with their application. Applicants without a current negotiated IDC rate agreement (including a provisional rate) and wish to charge the de minimis rate must reach out to FEMA for further instructions. Applicants who wish to use a cost allocation plan in lieu of an IDC rate proposal must reach out to FEMA for further instructions. Indirect costs are only allowable under the R&R Activity and are not allowable under the Hiring Activity.

Some applicants are not required by 2 C.F.R. Part 200 to have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement but are required to develop an indirect cost rate proposal instead. These applicants must submit a copy of their proposal with their application.

Copies of the indirect cost rate agreements or proposals, along with the SAFER Program application number, must be submitted electronically to FireGrants@fema.dhs.gov. Please ensure that the request details budget portion of

your application includes information pertaining to your indirect cost rate agreement or proposal. Post-award requests to charge indirect costs will be considered on a case-by-case basis and based upon the submission of an agreement or proposal as discussed above or based upon on the de minimis rate or cost allocation plan, as applicable.

What standards does the SAFER Program focus on?

The SAFER Program focuses on the Deployment or Staffing and Deployment compliance standards of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA):

- NFPA 1710 Assembly Requirements – Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Department (Section 5.2.4.1 – Single-Family Dwelling Initial Full Alarm Assignment Capability): This standard applies primarily to career fire departments and combination departments if the combination department chooses it.
- NFPA 1720 Assembly Requirements – Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments (Section 4.3 – Staffing and Deployment): This standard applies primarily to all-volunteer fire departments, but it may also apply to combination departments if the combination department does not choose to comply with the NFPA 1710 standard.

FEMA prioritizes bringing non-compliant (NFPA 1710 or 1720) departments into compliance in the most cost-effective manner.

Do applicants have to comply with the National Incident Management System?

SAFER Program applicants are not required to comply with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) to apply for federal assistance under the SAFER Program. However, any applicant who receives a FY 2025 SAFER Program award must achieve the level of NIMS compliance required by the Authority Having Jurisdiction over the applicant’s emergency service operations (e.g., a local government), before the end of the grant’s period of performance.

Information about NIMS can be found at <https://www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system>.

Hiring Activity

What type of firefighter positions will be funded under the Hiring Activity?

Grants awarded under the Hiring Activity enable all volunteer, combination, and career fire departments to restore staffing levels to attain a more effective level of response and a safer incident scene. FEMA awards Hiring Activity grants directly to volunteer, combination, and career fire departments to help fire departments increase their cadre of frontline firefighters by providing financial assistance to hire new, additional firefighters.

What are the eligible expenses under the Hiring Activity?

The only eligible expenses are the salary and associated benefits (actual payroll expenses) for the positions funded under the SAFER Program grant. Costs are reimbursable if they are included as part of the standard package, available to all operational firefighter positions, contractually obligated, and reimbursed via payroll. Compensation for a firefighter's normal, contracted work schedule is reimbursable, but overtime costs are not eligible for reimbursement by the SAFER Program grant award (including overtime for holdovers, extra shifts, to attend training, etc.). Only costs for overtime that the fire department routinely pays as a part of the base salary or a firefighter's regularly scheduled and contracted shift hours, in order to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act, are eligible.

Does SAFER allow regional applications for the Hiring Activity?

No, the Hiring Activity is not eligible as a regional project.

Recruitment and Retention Activity

What are the eligible expenses under the R&R Activity?

Applicants must correlate the activities for which funding is being requested with the identified recruitment or retention problems or issues being addressed. SAFER Program grant funds may only be used for volunteer firefighters who are involved with, or trained in, the operations of firefighting and emergency response. FEMA will not provide funding for a budgeted line item if an applicant does not provide enough information detailing how the item or activity will enhance the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. Allowable costs may be limited to reasonable amounts, as determined by FEMA.

All grant-related purchases and activities must be incurred, received and completed within the period of performance. Additionally, all funded activities under the R&R Activity must be governed by formally adopted Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Minimally, these SOPs should specify who qualifies for each of the incentives, specific requirements for earning the incentives, and the disposition of the awarded incentives if an individual fails to fulfill the stipulations. FEMA may ask for copies of SOPs before or after awarding a grant

Examples of eligible expenses include but are not limited to the following:

- Marketing program (e.g., media and print advertising) to recruit new volunteer firefighters;
- New recruit basic training;
- Leadership/career development training; and
- Personal Protective Equipment for new recruits.

For the full list of eligible and ineligible costs, please refer to Appendix B – Programmatic Information and Priorities, in the FY 2025 SAFER Program NOFO.

How is “new recruit” defined according to the SAFER Program?

A “new recruit” is defined as a volunteer that joins the department with the intent to serve as a firefighter after the recipient is notified of the grant award (e.g., the date of the award notification email in FEMA GO).

Does the SAFER Program allow regional applications for the R&R activity?

Yes. Eligible applicants may apply for a regional R&R Activity grant if the request will have a direct regional or local benefit beyond the immediate boundaries of the applicant’s first-due response area. Direct regional or local benefit means that other eligible organizations will receive a portion of the grant awarded funds, or the department will receive items purchased with the grant funds.

An eligible applicant will serve as the “host applicant” and can apply for funding on behalf of itself and any number of other participating R&R Activity eligible organizations. The application must include a list of all the participating organizations, including the point of contact information and EIN for each organization benefiting from a proposed regional project.

If awarded, the host applicant must agree to be responsible for all aspects of the grant. This includes but is not limited to accountability for all assets and all reporting requirements. Regional host applicants and participating partner agencies must execute a Memorandum of Understanding or equivalent document, signed by all parties participating in the award, before applying under the Regional Program activities.

Application Process

Where do I apply for a SAFER Program grant?

The online FY 2025 SAFER Program application is available through the FEMA GO application portal at <https://go.fema.gov/>. The application will also be linked with the U.S. Fire Administration’s website <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/a-z/grants/> and the [Grants.gov website](https://www.grants.gov/).

Which internet browsers are compatible with FEMA GO?

FEMA GO is compatible with the most recent major release of Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari and Microsoft Edge. Users who attempt to use tablet type devices or other browsers may encounter issues with using FEMA GO.

When can I apply?

Applications will only be accepted between 9 a.m. ET on Tuesday, May 19, 2026 and 5 p.m. ET on Friday, June 19, 2026. FEMA GO automatically records proof of timely submission and the system generates an electronic date/time stamp when FEMA GO successfully receives the application. The individual with the Authorized Organization Representative role that submitted the application will also receive the official date/time stamp and a FEMA GO tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission on the date and time that FEMA GO received the application.

Applications not received by the application submission deadline will not be accepted. Applicants using unreliable internet connections, such as dial-up connections, should be aware that submission can take some time before FEMA GO receives your application.

Applicants who experience system-related issues will be addressed until 3 p.m. ET on Friday, June 19, 2026. No new system-related issues will be addressed after this deadline.

Do I need to register with the System for Award Management (SAM)?

Yes. Per 2 C.F.R. § 25.205, SAM registration is required to both begin and submit a SAFER Program application in the FEMA GO system. Organizational SAM.gov registrations are only active for one year and must be renewed annually. Therefore, applicants must ensure the applicant entity has a valid and active registration in SAM.gov before starting an application.

Applicants should register with SAM at least one month before submitting their SAFER application to allow time for registration processing.

For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to: [Register with SAM](#). Applicants should contact SAM.gov with questions or concerns about their SAM registration.

DHS may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable UEI and SAM requirements. An applicant's SAM registration must be active at the time of application, during the application review period, and when FEMA is ready to make a federal award. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time DHS is ready to make a federal award, DHS may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and may award another applicant.

The submission of payment requests and amendments are also contingent on the information provided in the entity's SAM.gov registration. It is imperative that all information in the application is correct, current and matches the information in the SAM.gov registration. Please ensure that your organization's name, address, UEI number, and Employer Identification Number (EIN) are up to date in SAM.gov and that the UEI number used in SAM.gov is the same number used to apply for all other FEMA grant program awards.

More information on SAM.gov may be located in the FY 2025 SAFER Program NOFO and on the [Assistance to Firefighters Grant Programs Website](#). If applicants have questions or concerns about SAM registration, please contact SAM.gov.

How long does it take to receive a UEI number?

After registering with SAM, it can take up to four weeks to receive a UEI number.

May I change or edit my application after it has been submitted?

You will be able to review or edit the entire application prior to submission. However, if you would like to edit or change your application after submission, you will need to withdraw the application from consideration of award. The

application must then be resubmitted to FEMA before the application submission deadline of 5 p.m. ET on Friday, June 19, 2026 to be considered for an award.

How are the applications reviewed and selected for funding?

SAFER Program applications are reviewed through a multi-phase process. All applications are electronically pre-scored and ranked based on how well they align with the funding priorities outlined in the FY 2025 SAFER Program NOFO.

Applications with the highest score rankings per activity will also be evaluated through a series of internal FEMA review processes for completeness, adherence to programmatic guidelines, technical feasibility, costs/quantities, and anticipated effectiveness of the proposed project(s).

How important is it to address all Narrative Statements in the application?

The Narrative Statements of the application must provide unique and specific details about the activity for which applicants seek funding, including budget details. Peer Review Panelists will evaluate and score each activity based on the narrative elements within each activity. The weighted evaluation criteria used by the peer reviewers in determining the grant award, as described in the NOFO, make up the elements of the Narrative Statements' score.

Under the Hiring Activity, the peer review panel score is 50% of the total application score. Under the R&R Activity applications, the peer review panel score is 70% of the total application score.

Note: FEMA conducts reviews of a random sampling of applications to compare them for duplication including the narrative statements and statistical data. Therefore, all elements of the narrative statements must be specific and unique to the applying entity, and all statistical data must be accurate.

Applications with narrative statements that have substantial duplication of statements, sentences, or paragraphs to other submitted applications, and/or inaccurate data that could mislead reviewers may be disqualified. Discovery of falsification, fabrication or plagiarism of other grant proposals will disqualify the application(s).

For more detailed information, please refer to the Self-Evaluation Sheet for your Activity and applicant type on the [SAFER Program website](#).

What are the character limitations for text boxes in FEMA GO?

Each element must have a minimum of 200 characters. The maximum number of total characters is 3,000 per each narrative element, except for the Financial Need narrative, The Financial Need narrative allows for 4,000 characters.

The Narrative Statements blocks do not allow formatting. Please do not type the Narrative Statements using only capital letters. Additionally, do not include tables, special characters or fonts (e.g., quotation marks, bullets), or graphs. Space for the Narrative Statements is limited.

FEMA Contacts

How can I help FEMA prevent fraud, waste and abuse?

If you have information about instances of fraud, waste, abuse or mismanagement involving FEMA programs or operations, you should contact the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General Hotline at 800-323-8603; by fax at 202-254-4297; or online at <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/hotline>.

How can I obtain help with the application?

The Fire Grants Program Help Desk at FireGrants@fema.dhs.gov or (866) 274-0960 will be available to provide technical assistance with completing your SAFER Program application(s).

During the application period, the Fire Grants Program Help Desk will be staffed between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday, and until 5 p.m. ET on the last day of the application period. However, these hours may change as the application period progresses. The toll-free number also accepts voicemail messages after hours or if the line is busy.

For technical assistance with the FEMA GO system, please contact the FEMA GO Helpdesk at femago@fema.dhs.gov or (877) 585-3242, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. ET

Where can I find SAFER Program documents and other information?

You can find SAFER Program documents and additional information on the [Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Program webpage](#).

How do I sign up for e-mail notifications about the SAFER Program?

To register for automatic e-mail notices of NOFO availability and other important program information go to: https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHSFEMA/subscriber/new?topic_id=USDHSFEMA_409.