Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program Narrative Development Toolkit

FEMA is providing AFG Program applicants with an all-encompassing document to inform the development of the narrative sections of the application. The document is structured to provide best practices that apply to the development of all sections followed by section-specific guidance based on the successive placement of the narrative sections within the application.

Introduction:

The narrative sections of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program application are critical to receiving an award. There are six narratives that must be addressed in the application:

- Critical Infrastructure;
- Financial Need;
- Organization/Community Description;
- Project Description;
- Cost/Benefit; and
- Statement of Effect

Of these sections, Financial Need, Project Description, Cost/Benefit, and Statement of Effect are scored at Peer Review Panel. Each of the four sections represents 25% of the peer review panel score, which is averaged with the electronic pre-score to establish the final score. Attention to detail in developing these narrative sections is essential to submitting a successful application.

This document includes basics to remember and other suggestions to consider during application development. This is not a checklist of items required to write a successful narrative, but rather a comprehensive list of ideas to assist in your project narrative development. Not every point listed below will be relevant for your project nor is every point a requirement. There may be other aspects of your department/local area that should be included in your narrative but are not specifically listed in this document. This information should be helpful to you as you work to improve your department's firefighter safety and public protection capability through the AFG Program and other grant programs.

Best Practices:

This section of the document provides best practices to consider in the development of the application's narrative sections.

- Write your narratives in a Word document, then cut- or copy-and-paste into the application in the FEMA Grants Outcomes (FEMA GO) system before submitting.
- Be sure to SPELL CHECK before pasting into the FEMA GO application.
- Ensure your department's needs are written clearly, focusing on QUALITY not QUANTITY; you do not need to "fill the space" in the narrative box, but be sure each section paints a clear picture of the subject being

addressed.
- Maintain a smooth flow of information:
    - Avoid jumping back and forth between subjects, items, and using confusing phrasing or unusual abbreviations;
    - The easier it is for the peer reviewers to read and follow along, the more likely the reviewers will understand and recognize your needs and score it accordingly;
    - Confusion in the minds of peer reviewers about messaging, financial need, project need, usage, benefits, or outcomes may lead to reduced scoring.
- Have your ENTIRE application with completed narratives reviewed by someone else (fresh eyes) before submitting.
- Relate only local information, not national statistics, and provide information that is UNIQUE to your community.
- Tell YOUR organization's story. Avoid template narratives, or copied narratives from other departments.
- Do not use BRAND (vendor) names in your narratives.
- PRINT your application (CTRL P) before submitting.

Critical Infrastructure:

Critical infrastructure is defined as anything located in your FIRST DUE RESPONSE AREA, that if affected by a fire, explosion, or terrorist attack could result in large loss of life, multiple casaulties, or a major economic loss or disruption.

Examples of critical infrastructure include:

- Schools and universities;
- Large public assembly facilities (stadiums, theaters);
- Health care facilities;
- Chemical or manufacturing facilities (HAZMAT potential)
- Transportation infrastructure (highways, bridges, ports, rail lines)
- Large commercial or industrial sites;
- Large agricultural sites (crops, animals, storage/processing sites, silos, etc.);
- Power plants, water and/or sewer treatment plants, natural or propane gas facilities, dams, etc.; and
- Other target hazards.

Financial Need (25%):

Applicants should provide a comprehensive overview of their organization's budget, including but not limited to describing sources of revenue or funding and expenses. Applicants should describe their financial need and how consistent it is with the intent of the AFG Program. This statement should include details describing the applicant's financial distress, summarizing budget constraints, unsuccessful attempts to secure other funding, and proving the budget shortfall situation is out of their control.

You need to provide strong evidence showing the distress is beyond the applicant's control and federal intervention is necessary.

Please detail your budget, budget funds source, and provide a list of your expenses. Reviewers are looking to see that all budgeted funds are accounted for and that you do not have any surplus funds available.

This narrative should convince reviewers that the only way that you can fund your requested project is with an AFG Program grant award. Considerations to be addressed in your narrative, if applicable, may include:

Funding sources, limitations, and difficulties:

- 100% tax-funded, reliance on donations, fundraisers, service billing, other sources.
- Tax-funded by Town/City government:
    - Other capital projects needed and costs;
    - Previously funded projects and/or repayment; and
    - Limitations that prevent funding this project (i.e., new school, major infrastructure upgrades, capital purchases)
- Tax-funded, laws and/or regulations that limit funding:
    - Budget cap restrictions (impact on daily operations of jurisdiction);
    - Health care, pension, personnel costs exceeding cap limits;
    - Local voter approval required and/or voter denial.
- Loss of income due to vacant and/or abandoned properties.
- Tax-exempt properties within your area that you service but do not contribute to the tax base (examples):
    - Federal, state, county facilities;
    - Parks;
    - Colleges or universities; and
    - Religious facilities.
- Residential vs. commercial uses and populations: cost burdens on residents without significant commercial occupancies to share burden.
- Reliance on donations, fundraising efforts, emergency medical services (EMS) and/or service billing or other income sources.
- EMS and/or service billing
    - Rate of payment return;
    - Discounted insurance or Medicare reimbursement rates;
    - Default or charge-off rates or actual costs; and
    - Operating losses despite reimbursement income.
- Local ability to support donations and/or fundraising:
    - Personal or household median income levels, poverty level;
    - Limited population;
    - Efforts already in place to solicit donations or conduct fundraisers;
    - Additional demand on organization members' time;
    - Inability to fundraise due to current virus restrictions; and
    - Other local issues.
- If applicable and appropriate, discuss local poverty and/or unemployment rates, any loss of tax base, major taxpayer(s) closing and/or moving out.
- Lack of local job base (commuting time and/or expenses for residents that impacts ability for residents to afford taxes, donations, or fundraising increases).

Budget Summary:

- Break your budget down into easily understandable terms:
    - Consider snapshot view with total budget and line-item summary; and
    - Use figures and/or percentages to highlight impact (Budget $100,000; Personnel $85,000 [85%], etc.).
- Highlight fixed operating costs and required expenses (examples):
    - Personnel;
    - Insurance;
    - Utilities;

  - Mortgage, loan, or lease payments;
  - Station and vehicle maintenance; and
  - Tools or equipment maintenance.
- Highlight limited amount of budget remaining for equipment and/or Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) maintenance, upgrades, or new purchases.
- If repaying debt:
- How much per year?
  - How many years remaining?
  - For what purpose (vehicle, equipment/PPE, station construction/upgrade)?
  - How does this impact your ability to borrow more (credit maxed out, unable to afford increased payments)?
- Highlight needs within the organization and inability to meet them with current budget funding, savings, and/or financing.
- If you have capital reserve accounts, savings, rainy day funds, or remaining funds you're your operating budget:
  - Explain the designated purpose or any regulatory reason these funds cannot be used for this project or other explanation to address these funds;
  - Voter-approved annual apparatus and/or equipment capital reserve: amount deposited, balance, and number/age/cost of vehicles/equipment needed;
  - Other savings accounts and purposes; and
  - Operating reserve to maintain operations during period of reduced income, emergency expenditures, etc.
- Any unanticipated costs or emergencies beyond your control that impact budget:
  - Accidents or fires;
  - Damaged equipment; and
  - Increased response costs (COVID-19, etc.).
- Negative impact on budget due to these costs and/or reduced income due to unanticipated situations beyond local control.
- What other attempts have you made to fund this project?
  - City or town funds;
  - State funding;
  - Other grants;
  - Donations; and
  - Lack of success with other sources and need for grant funds as only source available to address this need.

Organization or Community Description:

This section of the narrative is NOT scored. However, it is important to be thorough and clear, so you set the stage for the reviewer to learn about your department or organization and your needs.

The reviewers likely are not familiar with your community, local needs, region, or state.

- Location, size and geography of coverage area – tell the reviewer about your community:
  - Where are you located: state, region, mountainous terrain, tourist destination, etc.;
  - Population, including any seasonal increase in population;
  - Urban, suburban, or rural, including other demographics;
  - Local land use, occupancy types, setting (overview of the town/city);
  - Any special weather conditions that you might encounter; and
  - Local points of interest, historical elements, etc.

- Tell us about your department or agency:
  - Number of stations;
  - Number of personnel, career, combination, or on-call/volunteer;
  - Number of engines, ladders, tankers, ambulances, etc.;
  - Type of services provided (fire suppression, EMS, tech rescue, HAZMAT, etc.);
  - Demand for services: call volume, training, fundraising, etc.; and
  - Auto aid or mutual aid agreements: increased area, population protected, additional call volume or fires.
- What's happening in your community:
  - Population growth or decline;
  - Rapid development;
  - Increasing incident responses;
  - New risks or hazards; and
  - Any other pertinent information of interest.

- Discuss things that make your department/organization/community unique:
  - Urban/suburban setting: population density, congestion, commercial, industrial, residential uses or occupancies, proximity to each other (school or senior center next to the chemical plant and matchstick factory?);
  - Rural areas: agricultural land uses, buildings, facilities, unusual related hazards or risks, remote areas, long response travel distances, road conditions, travel time; and
  - Reliance on automatic and/or mutual aid; response times and distances for aid responses; additional coverage area (sq. mi.) and population protected.

- Identify critical infrastructure you protect that challenges your department/organization or agency.

Project Description (25%):

The applicant should clearly identify all aspects of the project and budget. This includes providing local statistics to justify the needs of the organization and a detailed plan for how the organization will implement the proposed project. Describe the project and include budget descriptions of the major items (e.g., personnel, equipment, contracts, etc.).

- Describe any risk assessments conducted to determine the needs that are addressed in the application:
  - Internal risk assessment;
  - Study by consultant;
  - Recommendations of service technicians;
  - International Organization for Standardization (ISO) evaluation; and
  - How did you determine the need and organization priority for the requested items?

- Describe the problem:
  - Condition or age of current equipment, PPE, vehicle or need for equipment, PPE or vehicle not currently owned;
  - Any service issues, equipment failures, shortcomings, and/or safety issues that the grant project would address;
  - Any incidents with injury, near misses, or less than effective operations due to these failures, shortcomings or safety issues;
  - Repair costs, out-of-service times;
  - Personal and operating safety hazards and/or risks;
  - Reduced operational capacity, functional limitations;

  - Lack of compliance with current safety standards;
  - Impact on organization, auto, or mutual aid partners, and communities served; and
  - Attempts to remedy, maintain, or improve operations, hazards, risks, and inability to complete or maintain them.

- Identify the solution to the problem (grant request):
  - Item(s) needed;
  - Item(s) cost;
  - Identify method for determining needed items and associated costs;
  - Explain why the items or costs are necessary and reasonable;
  - Show evidence that you have conducted good market research to avoid requesting more items or funds than needed;
  - Provide detailed project budget;
  - Show that the itemized budget items are proven necessary, directly relate to the risk assessment, and are not excessive;
  - Demonstrate that the project will be completed within the period of performance; and
  - Illustrate the consequences of NOT receiving the AFG Program grant award.

- Describe how project aligns with the AFG Program HIGH priorities.

- Show that the project goals are evident, clearly articulated, and directly tied to the applicant's mission.

Cost-Benefit (25%):

Applicants should describe benefits to the organization or community if the project is funded. Provide justification for the budget items relating to the cost of the requested items. Show the reviewer that your requested project is a good investment of federal dollars in your community. The applicant should clearly identify and fully articulate the proposed achievements, consistent with the applicant's mission. Show that the project's goals benefit the organization and affected personnel and are advantageous when compared to the costs.

- Detail the advantages and value of the project, especially in maximizing firefighter safety and minimizing the high cost of firefighter injuries:
  - Retirement or removal from service of obsolete or dangerous equipment, PPE, or vehicles before injury occurs;
  - Potential costs for medical care, shift coverage, workers compensation benefits/future workers compensation coverage costs, life insurance or Public Safety Officer Benefit benefits if injury or fatality occurs;
  - Potential personal and financial burdens on responders and family members due to injury, permanent disability, or fatality;
  - Improved injury prevention, life safety protection, and operating capacity gained by grant-funded project; and
  - Improved compliance with recognized safety standards.

- Detail the benefits tied to organization's mission:
  - The funded project will enhance firefighter and public safety;
  - The funded project will enhance response times, operating capacity and/or decrease property loss;
  - The funded project will be used frequently;
  - The funded project will provide a cost-benefit by reducing maintenance, overhead, or administrative costs; and

  - The funded project will benefit your mutual aid partners (sharing equipment, interoperability, etc.).

- Detail how the project will maximize benefits and minimize costs:
  - Use of formal bid process;
  - Multiple vendor price solicitation; and
  - Use of established regional, state or cooperative competitive bid pricing.

- Demonstrate a high benefit for the cost incurred and maximize the level of funding going directly into the delivery of the project:
  - Low or no administrative overhead expenses related to the grant;
  - Application and award management by organization personnel; and
  - All awarded funding to be used for equipment, PPE, or vehicle project.

- Provide a cost-benefit formula to show the actual cost-benefit of your project. Examples include:
  - Cost per resident protected: PROJECT COST ($200,000) divided by EXPECTED LIFE SPAN of PROJECT (10 years) divided by POPULATION (20,000) = COST per RESIDENT: $1.00 per resident protected per year;
  - Cost per frequency of use: generally limited to lower costs with high call volume or frequency-of-use situations. PROJECT COST ($50,000) divided by EXPECTED LIFE SPAN of PROJECT (15 years) divided by AVERAGE/ESTIMATED FREQUENCY OF USE (5,000 calls/uses per year) = COST per CALL OR USE: $0.66 per call per year;
  - You can determine the expected useful life span used for your calculation. There is no predetermined chart. Keep in mind averages within the firefighting community and recognized standards;
  - The lower the cost per call/use/resident, the better for cost-benefit demonstration, but this is not always a clear indicator of the benefits to be received with the grant award and is not a required element of your narrative.

- Provide other possible benefits of grant award:
  - Potential improvement to your ISO rating resulting in property insurance savings to your community;
  - Improved recruitment and/or retention;
  - Improved community recognition and support; and
  - Other local benefit.

Statement of Effect (25%):

The applicant should demonstrate that the items requested are necessary for daily use, contribute to protecting lives and property, and support the organization's mission. Applicants should describe how this award would favorably impact the daily operations of your organization.

- How will the project favorably impact firefighter safety, public safety, and property conservation?
  - Improved safety and/or design or function of new equipment, PPE, or vehicle;
  - Reduced size and/or weight of equipment or PPE;
  - Improved capacity and/or function of equipment, PPE, or vehicle;
  - Improved functional features and/or ease of use of equipment or PPE;
  - Compliance with modern safety standards. Provide examples: e.g., National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1500, etc.;
  - Improved response and operating capacity;
  - More effective operations; and
  - Ability to commit more personnel safely.

- How will the project improve your day-to-day operations?
    - Eliminate out of service time and/or repair needs;
    - Remove obsolete and/or dangerous equipment, PPE, or vehicles from use;
    - Improve dependability and/or reliability of equipment, PPE, or vehicle;
    - Improve operating capacity – increased air supply, water supply and/or nozzle flow capacity, improved tool strength, etc.;
    - Improve training capabilities;
    - Improve firefighter safety protection;
    - Ability to commit full organization force;
    - Ability to launch and sustain effective firefighting and/or rescue operations;
    - Improve ability to protect property and/or reduce damage losses;
    - Improve ability to save lives due to grant-funded improvements;
    - Improve recruitment and/or retention and community support; and
    - Compliance with safety standards: provide information on which recognized safety standards (e.g., NFPA #, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, other) compliance will be achieved through this grant award.
- Use and frequency of use – project will be used on a frequent or daily basis and in mutual aid responses:
    - Provide information regarding current frequency of use and/or need for reduced training and/or response usage, service capability or reliance on mutual aid;
    - Improved training and/or response capability with grant funded equipment, PPE, or vehicle;
    - Decreased need for receiving mutual aid or ability to provide mutual aid as needed, enhancing response capabilities for the organization and aid partners;
    - Emphasize lifesaving capability improvements;
    - High frequency and/or high usage: PPE or self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) used every day or every call;
    - Hose and nozzles used every fire; and
    - Lower frequency and/or high life safety impact, e.g.: extrication equipment - critical capability needed to save lives - highlight lifesaving improvement.

- Offer comparisons between current equipment, PPE, or vehicle and new features and/or capabilities of equipment to be provided through this grant, if awarded:
    - Existing SCBA lack current required safety features and new SCBA meet current safety standards. List items not currently included on your SCBA and describe safety benefits the new SCBA will provide;
    - Current PPE condition, proper fit, motion restrictions, and compliance levels compared to new PPE protections provided;
    - Equipment limitations vs. improvements with grant funding;
    - Vehicles: current safety issues, limited capacities vs. increased operating capacities, personnel safety, etc.
    - Negative effects if grant is not funded.
    - Continued safety concerns using substandard equipment; and
    - Continued drain on budget via maintenance costs, etc.

Remember this document is not a checklist of items required to write a successful narrative but is a comprehensive list of ideas to assist in your project narrative development, as part of your grant application.

Program Narrative Examples: AFG, SAFER and FP&S

This document provides examples of successful application narratives under the Assistance to Firefighters (AFG), Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) and Fire Prevention Safety (FP&S) grant programs. FEMA is providing this information for reference purposes only to illustrate the level of detail and context that assist application reviewers in understanding proposed grant-funded projects, the effect those projects will have on the applicant and the communities they serve, applicant's financial needs, and the cost/benefit of the proposed project.

These examples are provided for reference purposes only and are not intended for use as a template or as the basis for application narratives. Applicants must prepare unique applications in order to be considered for award. FEMA reviews and compares applications for duplication including narratives and statistical data. Therefore, all elements of application Narrative Statements must be original, and all statical data must be accurate. Applications with narratives that have substantial copying of sentences or paragraphs and/or inaccurate data that may mislead reviewers may be disqualified. Falsification, fabrication, or plagiarism of other grant proposals or these sample narratives will disqualify the application(s).

Please consult the Notice of Funding Opportunity for each program for further guidance on how to apply.

Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program Narrative Example

The following is an example of a successful narrative under the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. FEMA provides this information for reference only. Applicants must prepare a unique application in order to be considered for award. Please consult the Notice of Funding Opportunity for further guidance.

Project Description:

Based on the results of a risk assessment and comprehensive review of our department capability to accomplish the mission and protect our personnel, the Example Town Fire Department (ETFD) seeks funding that will greatly enhance the health and safety of our firefighters and any civilians who visit our stations. We request a total of over $100,000.00 to replace each obsolete Source Capture Exhaust Systems (SCES) in all three stations – for a total of three systems replaced. All three systems were installed in 1995 and are currently in desperate need of replacement due to age, failing components, and outdated technology. Due to these issues the systems are no longer capable of effectively removing the dangerous diesel exhaust produced by our apparatus. As a result, the systems allow diesel exhaust, a known carcinogen, to permeate our gear, supplies, equipment, and living areas – all of which are adjacent to or above the apparatus bays and thereby create an unhealthy working and living environment. A new National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1500 compliant source capture diesel exhaust system in each station would eliminate the health risks and exposure to this cancer-causing exhaust by providing 100% capture of exhaust at the source and safely discharging it outside of the stations.

Twenty-five years ago, when the SCES were installed, our call volume was 3,654. In the past three calendar years ETFD has responded to an average of 7,535 calls. Our call volume has increased significantly and consequently wear and tear on the source capture exhaust systems has also increased significantly. However, that call volume figure only tracks the emergency calls and does not account for the additional daily uses of the SCES when apparatus leave and return to the station for maintenance, training, or in-service inspections. Including these additional non-emergency tasks, the SCES were used approximately 18,000 times across all three stations. The average annual cost to maintain and repair these aging systems over the same three-year period was $1,944.00. In

preparation for writing this application, the ETFD solicited and received multiple proposals to replace all the apparatus drops, electrical, mechanical, and pneumatic-operated components. Only the existing ductwork would remain in place, with some parts of the ducts to be adjusted (add ductwork/remove ductwork) to accommodate the apparatus configuration. The drops on the current system are incapable of withstanding the high temperatures of the newer apparatus exhaust pipes, which prevents us from conducting operational and functional checks of our apparatus/equipment indoors during the cold New England weather. An updated system including new electrical control panels and new exhaust fans would operate the system more efficiently and enable us to filter the harmful diesel exhaust prior to being discharged. All mechanical tracks, which have worn bearings and fail on a regular basis would be replaced with permanently sealed bearing tracks designed to withstand the increased frequency of use. And finally, all pneumatic-operated components would be removed and replaced with a much more reliable magnetic attachment to the apparatus exhaust pipe, providing 100% capture of the diesel exhaust. ETFD's commitment to Firefighter and civilian health and safety, combined with obsolete technology, increased maintenance costs and inability to remove harmful diesel exhaust from our stations leaves us with no alternative, but to seek AFG funding to replace the outdated source capture diesel exhaust systems with effective NFPA 1500 compliant systems.

Based on our assessment of received proposals, the project includes all parts, labor, installation, apparatus modifications, training on all installed systems, and a one-year parts/labor warranty.

Total Project Cost: $100,000.00 -10%

The Department's match: $9090.90

Federal Funding: $90,909.09

Statement of Effect:

Our primary mission is to protect life, property, and the environment for the people of Example Town. We know that the health and safety of the first responder is imperative to accomplishing this mission. Installation of a functional source capture diesel exhaust system is directly aligned to our mission as stated above. Working 24/7 in our three fire stations that are equipped with old and inadequate SCES, places our firefighters' health and safety at risk, and negatively impacts our daily operations and ability to provide these critical services. Like many others in the fire service, we have experienced an increase in demand for all types of hazard response services on a relatively stagnant budget. We realize that we are not alone; these operational and administrative challenges can be found in other fire departments in communities across the nation. Like those other fire departments, our combination of preexisting limited local revenue sources in a challenging economic climate, with minimal reserves and competing community needs, makes it highly unlikely that Example Town will be able to support projects of this scale without alternative funding sources. Based on our current limited resources and limited financial outlook we readily acknowledge that an AFG award would be our only opportunity to replace all three source capture exhaust systems. We also know that our firefighters are our greatest asset, and that ensuring their health and safety is critical to continue providing essential emergency services to our community. If awarded this grant, the daily operations of the ETFD would be positive, dramatic, and measurable without incurring any increase in our operating budget. New source capture diesel exhaust systems in our three stations would not only bring us in compliance with NFPA 1500, but it would allow the ETFD to sustain and improve our daily operations in the following ways: 1) replacing the old

and ineffective systems with new, reliable, state of the art equipment would effectively remove all dangerous diesel exhaust from our bays and stations; 2) removal of these carcinogenic emissions would improve firefighter health and safety and lessen the risk of cancer; 3) we expect the improved health and wellness of our members would increase morale and reduce potential illness and lost time, reduce overtime costs, and increase the number of firefighters available to respond to emergencies; 4) the new exhaust fans are designed to lessen the impact on the environment and have the capability to safely remove and filter the diesel exhaust prior to discharging it to the outside environment which also reduces the potential exposure to our citizens; 5) our firefighters would have the ability to check apparatus and equipment indoors in the cold New England weather, which would reduce our utility costs (operational costs) and increase efficiency; 6) annual service and repair costs would be reduced significantly with the installation of dependable and reliable components; and 7) our firefighters would have the peace of mind in knowing that when they come to work every day, and whether training, checking equipment, eating, or even sleeping, the station air they're breathing is safe and free of harmful chemicals.

The most dangerous job function a firefighter has is operating in an immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH) environment. To protect them, we supply our firefighters with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). In effect we identify a risk and then provide the appropriate level of protection to mitigate risk to our firefighters. A less obvious threat, but one that is still extremely dangerous, is the presence of carcinogens in our fire stations. The condition of our current source capture diesel exhaust systems severely limits our ability to keep our members safe from harmful diesel exhaust emissions. This funding will greatly increase the safety of our firefighters while in their stations – a place where they should also feel safe.

Financial Need:

Each year, Example Town and Example Town Fire Department are constrained by the continuing demand to minimize the tax rate and still provide cost-effective but high-quality emergency services. This challenge has been further compounded by the financial hardships brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our revenue by source is as follows: tax levy-61%, state aid-31%, local dontations-6% and other available-2%. Our town is also subject to a state statute that limits the annual increase from the previous year's property tax level to no more than 3%. Due to these tax levy limitations, we are severely hamstrung in our ability to raise additional revenue through property tax. The stark reality is that the rising costs of health insurance for our personnel continue to absorb the majority of this maximum 3% increase each year, so we rarely get to see benefits like new equipment. Property tax is the largest revenue generator to fund the municipal budget. To provide some financial relief to our citizens, who we recognize are similarly financially strained by the COVID-19 pandemic, the town has extended the property tax due dates which has the unfortunate impact of delaying tax collection and further magnifying our financial burden. We anticipated a slight increase in state aid, but that aid was funded to the same level due to state revenue losses resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic. Municipal operating costs continue to rise which places a larger burden on other revenue sources. A shortfall in the expected hotel/motel excise tax and meals tax since the start of the pandemic has risen to over $500,000.00.

These and other fiscal losses have made it difficult to simply maintain current staffing levels. To reduce overtime costs, we have combined some traditionally administrative roles with operational roles effectively making the personnel responsible for multiple jobs. For example, a Deputy Chief in Fire Prevention regularly provides coverage on weekday day shifts on the line and sometimes even a dispatch position. Due to declining revenues at both the local and state level, the Mayor and City Council have requested we level fund our fire department budget for the

18th consecutive year. The Mayor has also requested budgets from the Chief reflecting a 5% and 10% reduction in funding and has implemented a spending freeze for all town departments due to the uncertainty of funds. Based on the proposed reduction in state aid, decreased local tax revenue, and increasing costs of health insurance we do not anticipate an improved financial situation anytime soon. In past year, the town's unemployment rate was 7.3% and 15% of residents were living below the poverty level. The average median household income in Example Town is $52,684.00, 34% below the avg. median household income for the state – further indication that our town is unable to fund additional fire department purchases.

The fallout of the Coronavirus pandemic, combined with limited potential growth from our local revenue sources in an already challenging economic climate, with minimal reserves and competing community needs, Example Town will not be able to support the purchase of this equipment without funding from the AFG. Our budget for Fiscal Year XXXX is $7,000,000.00 with 89.6% utilized for personnel costs. The remaining funds are spent on building maintenance, apparatus repairs, utilities, fuel, PPE, tools and equipment, supplies, and training. If we don't receive this award, we anticipate increasing health care costs and annual maintenance costs which we blatantly cannot afford.

Cost/Benefit:

If awarded this grant, the Example Town Fire Department would be NFPA 1500 compliant regarding occupational safety and health standards and accomplish one of the primary AFG program goals – to protect the health and safety of our emergency personnel and enhance their ability to provide all hazard emergency services. Our community of Example Town will realize safety and financial benefits in the face of a difficult and challenging budget year. The cost benefit of this project is immeasurable relative to the health, safety, and potential lives saved. Numerous lives – from our first responders who work, train, eat and sleep at the stations 24/7/365, to the administrators that work daily in our office spaces, to the numerous citizens that visit our stations – are placed at risk by each ineffective source capture exhaust system. National and international bodies from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to the World Health Organization, recognize diesel exhaust as "carcinogenic to humans" and state that exposure to gases and particulates found in diesel exhaust increases the risk of cancer. We believe that replacing all three of the 25-year-old source capture diesel exhaust systems would improve air quality in our three stations and reduce illness and cancer risks in our firefighters.

The health benefits directly translate into financial benefits to our community due to decreased Workers' Compensation claims, medical bills, insurance settlements, overtime costs and disability payments. On a human level the entire department could be spared the devastating psychological effects of a cancer related illness or death of one of our own. With fewer health issues related to diesel exhaust more firefighters may be on duty thereby increasing fire protection throughout the community and providing a direct safety benefit to the citizens of Example Town. The Example Town Fire Department takes a proactive stance on firefighter safety and seeks to protect our personnel to the best of our ability in an inherently dangerous industry. All new hires are prohibited from smoking and are screened for nicotine addiction pre-employment. Additionally, smoking is prohibited in all stations, all apparatus, and at emergency scenes. Additionally, the ETFD enforces a stringent SCBA use policy for all IDLH atmospheres, and to the chagrin of some personnel actively enforce the use of SCBA during overhaul. We go take additional safety actions to monitor HCN to ensure a safe environment before removing SCBAs yet are exposed to

this very same chemical in our stations daily. Maintenance and repair costs continue to increase each year due to the age and deteriorating conditions of these systems.

The average annual cost to maintain and repair these systems over the last three years was $1,944.00. The only service provider available to repair our current systems is located more than hours away. The ETFD is facing increasing demands and costs for operational and personnel services on a budget that is 89.6% dedicated to firefighting staff. Without direct federal intervention we would be unable to afford the three replacement systems we need. When including the substantial quantity of Mutual Aid calls (as listed in the call volume breakdown) we provide to Neighbor County and Other County the essential financial cost/benefit of this grant amounts to an approximate $0.27 investment per resident, per year, over an expected 15-year service life of the systems. Although the lump sum request amount appears to be a considerable expense it's clear that this cost represents a substantial long-term value and will further reduce our current operating expenses.

Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Narrative Example

The following is an example of a successful narrative under the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grant Program. FEMA provides this information for reference only. Applicants must prepare a unique application in order to be considered for award. Please consult the Notice of Funding Opportunity for further guidance.

Financial Need

Describe your financial need to include descriptions of the following:

Income vs. expense breakdown of the current annual budget

Budget shortfalls and the inability to address financial needs without federal assistance

Actions taken to obtain funding elsewhere (i.e. state assistance programs or other grant programs)

How your critical functions are affected without this funding

The FY21 operating budget for the Town totals $40,123,456, with 49% appropriated for the school system and the remaining 51% divided across all other governmental units, including 15% for Public Safety. Slightly more than one-third of the Public Safety budget is allocated for the Fire Department, funded 80% from the General Fund and 20% from Emergency Medical Service (EMS) billings. Personnel costs require 96% ($2,000,000) of the appropriation, leaving 4% ($100,000) to fund all other needs, including fire-fighting supplies and gear replacement, EMS equipment and medications, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)-mandates, building and apparatus maintenance, plus office supplies and equipment. Not enough cuts can be made in the department's operating budget to fund additional personnel. Like many other communities, the town faces limited revenue growth, caused in part by caps on annual tax increases, while unregulated expenses and personnel costs outpace tax growth. The Town works strategically to maintain a high level of community services while ensuring that the tax rate remains affordable to both residential and commercial payers. This is increasingly challenging because of factors affecting state aid and local revenue available to municipalities. Since 1975 the state has capped property tax increases to 2.1% annually. Additionally, the state reduced funding to public schools in 1995, resulting in greater dependence on local taxes.

Local revenue was again reduced in 1998 when the Town's immediate neighbor, the Base closed. The Base provided many fiscal benefits including funding for students in public schools. In recent years, the Town's tax base has produced limited annual growth. To stimulate local business and income, we have incrementally increased tax financing. The growth produces new tax revenue, but less than needed for increased demands for Town services and the resulting cost increases for personnel and supplies across all departments. To meet the increasing demand for emergency responses, mandated inspection, and training, the town increased our total career staffing by two in 2000, allowing for three groups of three personnel, working 56 hours a week. In 2010 the department transitioned to a 42-hour work week, resulting in the addition of three more personnel to maintain the same level of daily staffing.

Since the last increase in per-shift staffing, call volume has increased by more than 50%. As the volume of calls and demand for services continue to escalate, it is critical to increase staffing to four personnel per shift to respond and perform as expected, keeping citizens safe and maintaining a safe environment for our members. The Town

administration, while recognizing that this staffing increase is badly needed, cannot identify a path to fund new positions without a tax increase which would require a public vote to override the limit. In the aftermath of the coronavirus, the likelihood of passing an override – which would involve a time-consuming campaign – is diminished. Our state does not have any funding assistance available to help cities or towns staff fire departments to an adequate, safe level. This grant represents our only near-term opportunity to add the needed firefighters. This is the second consecutive time we have applied. Without help, our citizens will lack proper protection, unless and until they vote to override the tax cap, a risky approach that, even if successful, can happen only in the long term, not now when it is urgent.

Project description

Why does the department need the positions requested in this application?

The department needs the positions requested in this application primarily due to the reduced level of available on-call personnel. The on-call membership has diminished drastically over the past 20 years. We are not unique in dealing with reduced availability of on-call personnel due to increased training requirements, work arrangements, and personal commitments. Today, many residents no longer work in the town where they live, and of those who do, few employers want to accommodate responses during work hours. Other time requirements for activities involving family, school, and the community are also taking up more available hours, further limiting time that on call members could commit to training and or emergency responses. This is further compounded by the fact that fewer members of the full-time staff are living in the town as they once did. This is occurring for various reasons, including housing costs and the limited availability of affordable rentals in the area.

The Fire Department's staffing has been adequate to support the town since the last increase in per shift staffing occurred. Since that time, the Department has seen a dramatic increase in call volume along with a broadening scope of responsibilities. In 2000, the department responded to 1,600 calls and completed approximately 500 inspections. In 2020 the department responded to 2,500 calls for service and approximately 700 inspections. This represents an increase of over 50% in the total call volume of the department. Additionally, about 9% of the department's annual call volume requires a simultaneous response to multiple incidents. This required the dispatch of an understaffed unit or mutual aid to approximately 150 calls for service in 2020. The increased call volume has put a strain on the current staffing model that uses off-duty or on-call members to act as additional responders to fulfill the staffing requirements of the department beyond the initial ambulance or engine response. When assessing these factors, the most direct solution is an addition of one full-time member per group. This is the best option as it will increase the staffing of the primary engine to four personnel. This will give the department the most efficient initial response while positioning the department to reach the staffing levels of NFPA 1720 a majority of the time.

How will the positions requested in this application be used within the department? (e.g., 4th on engine, open a new station, eliminate browned out stations, reduce overtime)?

If the department receives this grant, it will add one member to each of the four working groups. This would increase the staffing to four members per group and would be assigned to the primary engine for the Town and cross staff the primary ambulance. The four personnel would be available to respond on the primary engine when all personnel are in the building. This staffing model would also ensure that a two-person engine company can remain available and able to respond to incidents without delay when the ambulance is out. The four-person shift would also allow

the staffing at the Paramedic level of both of the department's ambulances during times of simultaneous calls. The benefits of the added positions to the department and the community increase both sides' safety. Meeting the intent of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1720 and 1500 for two-in-two-out provides a safety level. It guarantees the ability to make immediate entry to reduce fire-related deaths, injuries, and unnecessary property loss due to fire. The new hires will meet NFPA 1582 physical requirements and NFPA 1001 Standard for Firefighter Professional Qualifications.

What specific services will the requested positions provide to the fire department and community?

Within our organization, it is not uncommon for the shift incident command to operate as a line member and be unable to appropriately command the incident and interior crews. The addition of the fourth member on the engine would allow incident commander to retain better situational awareness of the entire incident and monitor the safety of crews operating within an immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH) environment. Having that extra person immediately available on the fire ground means less double dipping of responsibilities, thus allowing crews a better situational awareness. Safety is the priority, first and foremost, under the axiom of strength in numbers. The Dallas Study and National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) reporting all prove the increase of staffing is critical to health and safety. A 2010 NIST report stated that a four-person crew completed the assigned tasks 30% faster than a two-person crew and 25% faster than a three-person crew. The four-person crews completed the same number of tasks on the fire ground, on average, seven minutes faster than the two-person crews.

Similar comparisons can be said of going from a two-person crew to a three-person crew. Beyond the immediate results, long-term benefits include reducing over-exertion injuries and associated costs, and increased coverage and decreased response times when an ambulance is being cross-staffed. Having the primary Engine staffed with four personnel will give the department the most efficient initial response while positioning the department to reach the staffing levels of NFPA 1720 a majority of the time.

Describe how funds awarded through this grant would enhance the department's ability to protect critical infrastructure within the primary response area.

The added benefit that additional shift staffing will bring to the community was impressed on the Town in 2015 from a response to a reported explosion and fire at a commercial structure in town. The primary engine should have been staffed with three personnel for that response, but luckily was able to respond with four due to a per diem firefighter that had not left the building after their shift had ended. The response of four personnel allowed the engine to arrive on scene, establish their own water supply, stretch the first line into the fire, and to locate and remove a victim to waiting EMS in about 10 minutes of the engine's response.

The results of that event have been a driving force for the department to continue to work towards permanently adding a fourth firefighter per shift. This event also highlighted to the town's management, citizens, and businesses the benefits that the additional staffing will bring to our critical infrastructure and to the Town as a whole. With our current staffing arrangement, there is a significant portion of time that the engine is in a low-staff level or browned-out. As highlighted earlier in this application, the department responds to about 9% of the annual call volume simultaneously. The remaining one member must await the arrival of call-back or on-call members before being able to operate effectively and safely. With the addition of a fourth member per group, the staffing configuration will be at a level where the engine is able to remain in-service, staffed with the ability to be augmented on scene by the

ambulance crew, or by on-call or off-duty personnel. This will result in a more effective fire ground responses by having the first due engine staffed and on-scene within the normally expected response times versus requiring mutual aid responses. As there is a significant life hazard risk with the occupancies in the town and high potential loss of property and revenue, the ability to respond with a fully staffed engine will reduce the loss that can occur during an event. The increase in the ability of an engine company to act efficiently and effectively will be the largest enhancement in the protection of critical infrastructure.

Impact on daily operations

Explain how the community and the current firefighters employed by the department are at risk without the positions requested in this application.

The addition of the fourth person to the assigned crew will allow us to operate at an optimal staffing level, or as close that that as possible, the majority of the time. Currently the members of the department face decisions that need to be made based on the reality of limited staffing. The current shift strength of three personnel is assigned to cross-staff both the primary engine and ambulance. Last year the department responded to more than 1,600 medical incidents that resulted in engine staffing levels being reduced from three to potentially one firefighter for a significant period of time throughout the year. At the firefighter level, to get a task done requires extreme extra effort for a three-person task to be completed by two or a two-person task that must be completed by one. Firefighters get the job done even if they must over-exert and risk injury. We owe it to our people to prevent this from occurring. Even if calls are responded to during periods of full staffing, a three-person engine company is much less efficient than a four-person company. In addition to the benefits outline above the department will also see a benefit from having two personnel to respond to a second emergency call while the primary ambulance is out.

Currently the department refuses a high amount of mutual aid responses for a transport or ALS intercept ambulance because of inadequate staffing. Beyond the possibility of responding to mutual aid requests is the response to multiple calls for service at the same time. Over the past few years, the department has averaged 150 responses annually that occur while at least one other call for service is happening. The addition of one more firefighter per group will provide an increased level of flexibility to respond adequately and safely to any call for service.

How will that risk be reduced if awarded?

The largest risk reduction from the added staffing will be achieved with the ability of the department to reach the assembly requirements of NFPA 1720. The need for risk reduction was highlighted in June 2018, when the primary engine responded to what would end up as a Four Alarm fire. The response is a clear example of the risk that we are attempting to reduce with the additional staffing, as the engine responded to that incident with only one firefighter. The shift had been staffed with the department's minimum of three personnel, with two personnel being called out on a medical transport to a distant hospital. The medical resulted in the engine responding with less than sufficient help and has reinforced the need for the department to address staffing levels and call back procedures.

For the community, the additional staffing will provide better coverage and greater chance of getting on scene in our desired response times. The crew will also be able to complete the initial fire-ground operations more rapidly and effectively thus decreasing the risk of injury or harm to personnel and members of the community. It will also provide more flexibility during calls requiring crews to be split due to the need for multiple ambulances or an engine and an

ambulance, for example. For department members, the extra set of hands per shift will provide a mechanism in which the level of over-exertion can be reduced.

Cost benefit

Describe the benefits (e.g., quantifying the anticipated savings and/or efficiencies) the department and community will realize if awarded the positions requested in this application.

Reducing the community's liability to fire-related emergencies, hazards, and property loss while limiting our firefighter's exposure to unnecessary risk will be realized through this cost-benefit. The community will realize the effects of this added manpower due to increased flexibility to respond in a multitude of arrangements based on the type or number of emergency calls. Benefits to the community will be seen across all our response models through, for example, the ability to staff both ambulances when multiple calls happen at the same time or to allow for the engine to respond with two personnel along with an ambulance to auto accidents. The addition of a fourth member to each group will have the biggest impact on the efficiency of the crew's ability to work as a single engine company on the fire ground. The additional personnel will allow for a faster tempo of task completion than what is able to be done with the current staffing level. Having that one more person on the fire ground also means less double dipping of responsibilities, allowing crews to be more aware and focused on their assigned tasks and duties. Beyond the immediate results of efficiency, long-term benefits are reduced chances of over-exertion of a member with the costs associated with that type of possible injury and lost work hours and the need for overtime to fill their vacancy.

There is no simple way to display or figure out a direct cost savings that is attributable to the addition of this personnel. Until a time when our engine is staffed with four personnel 100% of the time the level of staffing of that apparatus will always be scrutinized. If there was ever an injury or worse to a member of the engine company or to the public at the current staffing level of one, two, or three personnel on the apparatus, we will always have to question the cost when dealing with that injury or loss of life and judging whether or not it could have been prevented. The same logic is applicable in terms of property conservation in evaluating whether property could have been saved or a loss prevented with increased personnel levels.

Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) Grant Program Narrative Example

The following is an example of a successful narrative under the Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Program. FEMA provides this information for reference only. Applicants must prepare a unique application in order to be considered for award. Please consult the Notice of Funding Opportunity for further guidance.

Financial Need

Our city has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdowns and restrictions have caused many businesses to close leaving downtown storefronts and industrial facilities vacant. Our city is a post-industrialized city that once had 20,000 industrial jobs but now has an estimated 2,000 such jobs, with little to no growth in economic development. Our city is a typical East Coast city with more than its share of urban problems and limited resources. The decline of the city's manufacturing infrastructure and economic down turns have resulted in an unemployment rate of 12%, leaving a staggering 33% of the population living below the poverty level.

Our department is funded exclusively by tax revenue. Unfortunately, 50% of the real estate in our city is classified as exempt, including non-tax paying state and non-profit institutions. We attempted to implement a cost recovery for services program, but community leaders voted it down in council. We aggressively pursue grant opportunities and use data to educate elected officials to show justification for our financial requests. However, these strategies have not been enough to overcome our financial issues which will only become worse as the pandemic continues. The city and its fire department have felt the declining economic conditions in our state; municipal aid from the state is estimated to be reduced by $12 million. It is particularly acute in our city due to the aging infrastructure, a declining tax base, and aging population on fixed incomes, a growing unemployment rate, and the presence of many high-risk populations, all of which have been significantly affected by the pandemic.

Ninety-seven percent of our annual budget is accounted for by fire fighter salaries and benefits leaving only $200,000 for every other expense. This adversely impacts our ability to deliver fire safety programs, upgrade equipment, or provide training and other things of this nature. In the past seven years, we have lost our rescue company and reduced personnel by 30%. We urgently need this grant money to effectively protect the life and property within our city and region especially in light of the current pandemic.

Commitment to Mitigation

Our FD's commitment and proactive posture towards reducing fire risk can be illustrated in the following ways:

- Our adoption of NFPA 1035, Standard on Fire and Life Safety Educator, Public Information Officer, Youth Fire Setter Intervention Specialist and Youth Fire Setter Program Manager Professional Qualifications;
- Sending FFs from our department to the National Fire Academy's course offering on Community Risk Reduction;
- Our recent selection into the NFPA's Community Risk Reduction pilot program;
- Adoption of the 2018 State Fire Safety Code; and
- Adoption of commercial/residential sprinkler codes (we enforce the adopted fire codes through plan reviews, fire code permits, and annual business inspections).

As the region served has made the transition from rural to urban, greater emphasis has been placed on education, enforcement, and engineering. Our jurisdiction has a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-approved mitigation strategy that we proactively utilize to ensure that we are mitigating issues to the best of our ability. Our commitment to reducing fire risk can be illustrated by our usage of a program which allows us to track fire related issues throughout our jurisdiction. Once trouble areas are identified, we can focus our fire safety education and prevention outreach activities and resources towards those areas. This allows us to reduce the number of fire related events and more effectively mitigate any that do occur.

Vulnerability Statement

Our Department completed a formal community vulnerability assessment using an analysis of our National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) data from years 2017 to 2020, information gathered via our community dashboard and direct input from our residents. Some of the at-risk populations in our service area include: 1) 20% are children under the age of 14; 2) 13% are older adults over the age of 65; 3) 33% of households have income

less than the Federal Poverty Level and/or are Medicaid eligible; 4) 28% of older adults are deaf or hard of hearing; 5) 40% of older adults have ambulatory difficulty; and 6) 45% of older adults live alone. The vulnerability assessment identified hazards which presented risks to firefighters, residents, and property. Cooking and improperly discarded smoking materials contributed to a significant number of structure fires in multifamily buildings. A number of these living units did not have working smoke alarms or any smoke alarms at all. The City's Commission for Persons with Disabilities serves hundreds of children and adults with developmental disabilities. Its 5000 multifamily homes of balloon framed construction have created significant life and fire risks when considering the high occupant density consisting of young children, seniors, and lower socio-economic residents. These residents have been identified as our most vulnerable population. Therefore, multifamily buildings occupied by our high-risk population will be targeted by our Department when conducting home safety surveys and the installation of free smoke alarms. Any fire hazards identified during a home safety survey will be immediately addressed and the residents will be educated as to why the condition is a fire hazard.

Project Description

Our existing program consists of fire companies conducting home safety surveys and installing free 10-year battery powered smoke alarms at the same time, if needed. Our existing program has been successful, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic we have had to redirect funding towards personal protective equipment (PPE). We identified our capability gap using the following points:

- Our FD identified what the situation pertaining to our current smoke alarm installation was;
- We identified where we want it to be;
- We identified the gaps which are the reasons we are in our current situation and not where we want to be; and
- We came up with solutions to close the gaps.

We discovered that the gaps were a lack of funding to purchase the smoke alarms, which are at the heart of our home safety survey program. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has decreased our ability to enter homes during nonemergency events. Our Department has offered to conduct virtual home safety surveys where we would make safety recommendations and schedule the installation of a free smoke alarm if needed. Our project is to supply free smoke alarms to be used in our home fire safety campaign with door-to-door smoke alarm installations. Our Department is responsible for the protection of life and property. Home safety surveys are a proven method in successfully lowering injuries, deaths and property damage caused by fires.

A major component of our home safety surveys is the installation of smoke alarms. If funding is received, the smoke alarms purchased will be used for our current program which has been highly successful. The components of the program include the following:

- Robust outreach to residents who are considered a high-risk population. Education and marketing will occur through our website, social media venues, newsletters, and direct outreach to our residents receiving the devices as well as to social service agencies;
- Home safety surveys;
- Installation of smoke alarms while providing fire safety materials • Documentation at the company level and

NFIRS; and

- Annual program evaluation.

Our Department is collaborating with the following entities to ensure the successful completion of our project: 1) local civic organizations; 2) elderly support organizations; 3) health care based organizations; and 4) faith based groups. Our Department has had great success with our home safety survey with smoke alarm installations program in the past. The past year has been especially difficult due to the pandemic. We feel that we have analyzed our current program, identified the gaps that our hindering our program, and have developed a a plan to ensure the continued success of our program. However, without grant funding we will be unable to ensure that our program thrives.

Implementation Plan

The main goal of this proposed project is to install 1500 smoke alarms within one year. The following objectives have been created to assist in this goal being met: 1) increase interaction with city residents that are considered a high-risk population when it comes to fire; 2) install fire smoke alarms and provide educational handouts in a variety of languages to members of our high-risk population; 3) engage with community partners to make sure we are reaching our high risk population (for example, visiting nurses organizations and the Senior Center); and 4) establish a program evaluation to ensure that the program is effective.

The following points represent the specific manner in which our department plans on meeting the objectives discussed above:

- Establish strong relationships with civic, religious, neighborhood and other groups throughout the community in an effort to make smoke alarm installations easier
- Technology to conduct pre- and post- tests on fire safety, and to establish a database of the residents with which we interacted. Addresses from this database will be cross referenced with NFIRS on a monthly basis to gauge the effectiveness of our community interaction. This is also going to be a key component of the program evaluation, and it is anticipated that any issues that arise will be identified and mitigated early
- Our Department will effectively utilize social media, the City's newspapers, the local public access tv channel and local radio stations in a media blitz to provide information related to this program
- Members of the Department, supported by the Fire Marshal's Office, will deliver the project, and numerous partnerships will be involved.

Examples of these partnerships include, but are not limited to, the senior center, the housing authority, and local religious centers. We are requesting a 12-month period of performance for the following reasons: 1) the installation of 1500 smoke alarms is labor intensive and must be done by trained on duty firefighters; and 2) the COVID-19 pandemic will limit our ability to interact as robustly as we would like with the public.

To accomplish our goals, the project plan includes the following activities & timelines: 1) creation of internal project team (month 1); 2) engage community partners (month 1); 3) identify target neighborhoods (month 1); 4) acquire products (months 1 & 2); 5) create project monitoring, evaluation, and long-term data tracking methodology (months 1 & 2); 6) create educational and marketing material, as well as calendars, including social media messaging

(months 1 & 2); 7) develop department training (month 1); 8) train crews and prevention staff (month 2); 9) launch installation (month 2); 10) conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation (months 3, 6, 9, & 12); 11) develop project reports (months 3, 6, 9, & 12); and 12) publicize and share pilot outcomes with community partners, other fire departments, and the public (ongoing).

Evaluation Plan

A program evaluation form was developed for use in evaluating all of our community education programs. These evaluations will provide feedback about all community-based education programs, and will also be used for the expanded home safety campaign and smoke alarm installation program. Our NFIRS data will be used to measure the level of risk at the outset of the project. We have created Activity Codes in NFIRS that will help us to track our interaction within our high-risk population. Before and after smoke alarm and fire safety education questionnaires will be used to measure a change in the safety behaviors of our high-risk population. This tool will allow information discussion and evaluation to highlight successes, gaps, and areas for improvement to this program and the other public education program our Department offers. Our Department will always evaluate the success rate of our program by answering the following questions: 1) how many smoke alarms were installed; 2) how many home safety inspections were conducted; 3) did we successfully reach our target audience; 4) did we meet our installation goals; 5) what was the level of media coverage we received; 6) did we receive local support for our program that we can leverage for future community outreach endeavors; and 7) how can we enhance our program to make it more efficient. Evaluating our program's effectiveness is vitally important so we can share data on lives saved and other positive impacts.

This data can be used when requesting support for our program or justifying its existence. In addition, the following points represent data that will be collected throughout the grant's lifespan: 1) the decrease in fire incidents per 1000 residents in our high risk population; 2) decrease in fire deaths per 1000 in our high risk population; 3) percentage of the entire population that we interact with; 4) percentage of the high risk population that we interact with; and 5) local number of lives saved and the decrease in property damage.

Cost Benefit

The Department holds itself to a high standard when it comes to the community risk reduction and fire prevention. Our firefighters take pride in our community interaction. They and their families need to know that we are doing everything in our power to make sure that they make it home safely at the end of their shift. Installing smoke alarms in homes leads to early notification of fires. This increases our chances at responding to a fire still in the incipient stage. Early notification of fires will reduce the number of times our firefighters are faced with the risk of injury or death. Cost benefits include the following: 1) reducing workmen's comp premiums; 2) reducing overtime expenses; 3) reducing or avoiding liability issues with legal fees; and 4) creating a more effective, healthier, and safer workforce. Early notification of fires, which can quickly get out of control, especially in the balloon frame homes, would lead to less property damage and a decrease in firefighter and civilian injuries.

Property fire damage and injuries contribute to an increase in Insurance Services Office (ISO) fire rating, which leads to rising insurance costs. The cost benefit here is keeping insurance costs down for our citizens. We have an average median household income of $40,000 versus the state's average of $65,000. Our per capita income is $20,000 versus the state's at $40,000, and our population in poverty is 33% versus the state's at 10%.

Our budget is derived from a tax base where growth is stagnant, and on state aid which is being cut drastically. The cost benefit here is saving our citizens from a tax increase. This is derived by allowing us to maintain our daily operations in a safe manner without further stressing our limited financial resources. Receiving this funding would mean we can continue to put fuel in our trucks, train our firefighters, and maintain our current level of operations. A cost benefit is being able to keep our smoke alarm program running during the COVID-19 pandemic. Any discretionary funds that might have been used to buy smoke alarms had to be used to buy PPE. Factoring in the costs of educational and promotional supplies, the total cost of our project breaks down to $19/household. We will provide additional benefit by marketing the program plan, process, and outcomes to other fire departments and organizations.