



American Rescue Plan Firefighter Grant Guidelines

Fiscal Year 2024

**State of New Jersey
Philip D. Murphy, Governor**

**Department of Community Affairs
Jacquelyn A. Suárez, Acting Commissioner**

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The American Rescue Plan Firefighter Grant (“Firefighter Grant”) is a competitive grant that supports local and regional fire department firefighters by ensuring that they have proper fire protection, cleaning, and sanitization equipment. Ensuring that firefighters are properly protected against the strain of emergency fire requests as well as having proper virus protection is vital in today’s world. Access to funding to purchase the appropriate gear, clothing, and equipment is critical for mental and physical health, particularly for those fire departments with limited operating budgets and large numbers of volunteers. Assisting local and regional fire departments in purchasing gear, clothing, and protective equipment helps address these equity considerations. The Firefighter Grant will allocate funds to allow departments to make these needed purchases.

Firefighter Grant funds will be allocated to each grant recipient to help cover costs associated with the purchases of:

- Protective items (turnout clothing ensembles, pants, helmets, hoods, gloves, footwear, etc.)
- Cleaning and Advanced Cleaning equipment
- Oxygen equipment;
- PPE; and
- Other fire and/or virus protection equipment as determined to be appropriate by the Division of Local Government Services (“DLGS”).

The grant review process will prioritize departments with a demonstrated need. Departments with existing underserved populations and/or unmet firefighting needs, will be prioritized. All costs must be articulated in the grant budget proposal and approved by DLGS.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

All local and regional fire departments in New Jersey are eligible to apply.

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To qualify for Firefighter Grant funding, each eligible applicant must:

- Describe the intended use of grant funding for the purchase of fire gear, clothing, and/or equipment.
- List the key personnel and/or outside consultant that will be managing the grant funds and purchase of equipment.
- Submit a governing body resolution acknowledging and approving any grant application and the proposed plan to use funds for the purchase of approved items.

ELIGIBLE COSTS:

Eligible costs are defined as equipment purchased on or after the grant award date.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants must submit applications utilizing the NJDCA SAGE Portal (see requirements below). Each application submitted to DLGS shall include a description of the intended use of grant funding for the purchase of specific gear, clothing, and/or equipment; demonstrate the applicant's capacity to obtain the necessary items; and list key personnel that will be managing the grant funds, including a grant coordinator, administrator, or other primary contact.

The following forms must be submitted with the American Rescue Plan Firefighter Grant:

- a. Grant Application
- b. Governing Body Resolution
- c. Department Narrative Detailing Need
- d. Detailed Proposed Project Budget
- e. Certification Regarding Debarment and Suspension - Schedule G
- f. Certification Regarding Lobbying - Schedule H

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- a. The maximum grant amount request shall be \$75,000. Fire Departments requesting amounts in excess of \$75,000 shall identify and justify the excess amount in the narrative section of the application.

b. Applicants are required to submit the following information:

1. Number of fire calls for calendar years 2021, 2022 and 2023.
**(As reported in the NFIRS – if used)
2. Number of “Active” firefighters for calendar years 2021, 2022 and 2023.
3. Population Served.
4. Evidence of serving underserved populations, and/or unmet firefighting needs.
5. Local Match (if no local match, describe why). **Please note:** Local match is not required but is used in the application scoring process.

**Note: For volunteer fire companies, do not include “Exempt” members.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

DLGS must be in receipt of one electronic copy of the completed application in SAGE by 5:00 P.M. EST on December 8, 2023 for the applicant(s) to be eligible for grant funding.

Incomplete applications will not be considered for funding. Applications not submitted on or before 5:00 P.M. on December 8, 2023 will be rejected.

GRANT MANAGEMENT

Once your local government entity has submitted an application for your municipal grant and awarded to your municipality, managing your municipal grant will be an important part of the grant process. The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) utilizes the System for Administering Grants Electronically (SAGE), a web-based application to accept and approve grant applications and manage executed grants. The DCA’s SAGE can be located at: <https://dcasage.intelligrants.com/portal.asp>. The User Manual for SAGE is available on the grantee’s SAGE home page.

The DCA’s Division of Local Government Services (DLGS) will administer the grant program. All communications and actions in administering grants between the grantees and the DLGS will occur through SAGE.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENTITY RESPONSIBILITIES – SAGE - AGENCY INFORMATION

Each local government entity has an Agency Profile or Agency Information page established in SAGE and is required to keep this information up to date. For example, when mayors change due to elections and/or other circumstances, the mayor's information is required to be updated. **Please note:** the mayor and executive director are the only authorized individuals that can approve a grant agreement. Other contact information for the financial officer and other agency contacts must be updated when there is a turnover in professionals/responsibilities.

The SAGE requires a minimum of two agency contacts, the mayor or executive director and the financial officer. The DLGS requires additional agency contacts to be added for the agency staff that will be administering the grant on behalf of the local government entity.

Each local government entity is also required to have accurate information regarding certain fields located on the Agency Information page as listed below:

- Entity Name, Address, City, State, Zip Code, and Phone Number
- Main Contact, Mayor/Executive Director, Financial Officer
- Federal Employer ID Number
- SAM Unique Entity ID
 - Please note that your entity's DUNS number is no longer valid. Entities are required to use SAM's 12-digit alphanumeric Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), which took effect on April 1, 2022. Your financial officer should know the UEI as it is used in American Rescue Plan Local Fiscal Recovery Funds reporting to the U.S. Treasury.
- Vendor Number
 - For most local government entities, the vendor number is your 9-digit federal ID with a 2-digit extension – example: 216000XXX – 99 or a 9-digit alphanumeric - example: V00000000.
 - The vendor number can be found and identified in the NJSTART E-Procurement system located at: <https://www.njstart.gov/bsol/>.
This will be the same vendor number used to receive annual state aid via direct deposit. Your financial officer can identify this information.

GRANT ADMINISTRATION PROCESS

GRANT AGREEMENTS

After the award letters are distributed, the DLGS will create grant agreements for each applicant. The grant agreement outlines the terms and conditions of the grant. More importantly, the grant agreement will identify the term of the grant, which will be one year from the date the award letters are sent out.

Grant agreements will be distributed through SAGE and appear on the mayor's or executive director's task list for approval. An email notification will also be sent to the mayor and executive director listed in SAGE. Once approved, the grant agreement will be executed.

PROGRESS/PERFORMANCE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Grantees are required to submit periodic progress/performance reports. Progress/performance reports are required to be submitted by the grantee bi-annually. Progress reports are created by the grantee in an application such as Word, to update DLGS on project completion. SAGE will reflect the progress/performance report schedule listed on the grantee's grant menu as Grant Report Periods. SAGE will not send out a reminder that progress reports are due. The DLGS recommends that the grantees' grant administrators update their personal calendars to remind them of filing progress reports.

GRANT FUNDING PROCESS – MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS

Following the execution of the agreement, the grantee can seek reimbursement of eligible costs, provided that all award conditions have been satisfied.

Grantees shall maintain and retain accounting and other grant-related records and information for the duration of the project funded by the grant, as required by applicable state and local laws and regulations, but for no less than two (2) calendar years.

Such records shall be subject to examination, audit, and inspection by the DLGS and/or any other federal, state, or local agency that has jurisdictional authority.

The DLGS reserves the right to rescind or reclaim funds, withhold future grant funding, and/or disqualify a grantee from participating in future grant awards if any condition of the grant program is unmet, including if grant funds received by the grantee are not properly accounted for, or if the grantee fails to meet reporting or certification requirements.

REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

Following the execution of the agreement, the grantee is permitted to move funds between authorized categories within these guidelines for eligible items without requesting prior approval from the DLGS.

All municipal grants are reimbursement based. There will be no advance payment of grant funds. While reimbursements may be made semi-annually when semi-annually progress reports are due, the DLGS recommends filing for reimbursement after all grant funds have been expended. Eligible costs are reimbursed to the grantee upon submission of evidence of payment by the grantee. **Please note: Purchase orders, vendor invoices, and proof of payment documentation dated prior to the award announcement date are not eligible for reimbursement.**

Requests for payment must be made through the DCA SAGE portal by submitting a Financial Status Report (FSR), Expense Report, and Project Progress Report filings that are up to date. The recipient is required to upload a PDF file containing copies of fully executed purchase orders, vendor invoices, and copies of canceled checks (front and back) documenting the expenditure of funds for which reimbursement is sought.

Reimbursement requests are required to be received by the DLGS no later than two months after the expiration of the agreement. Payment will be made via electronic transfer of funds to the account and financial institution identified within the vendor number listed on your agency information page.

GRANT CLOSEOUT PROCESS

At the conclusion of the approved project period, which may coincide with the date upon which the grantee requests final payment but shall not be before the completion of the municipal grant project components for which funding was provided, except as otherwise provided in writing by DLGS, the recipients must submit a final progress report documenting that all administrative responsibilities and required activities under the grant agreement have been satisfactorily completed.

ASSISTANCE

Applicants may contact Stacey Taylor-Burnell at Stacey.Taylor-Burnell@dca.nj.gov or Alessandra Case at Alessandra.Case@dca.nj.gov to discuss program and project needs up to submission of the application.