

RIAFC

Training, Physicals, and PPE Reimbursement

for Volunteer Emergency Responders

Administrative Guide



Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs Foundation

2012 SAFER Grant for Recruiting
New Volunteer Emergency Responders

April 15, 2013

Introduction

The Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs Foundation's (RIAFC) scholarship program was developed as a way to recruit and retain volunteers in response to a critical need identified by our association's volunteer fire departments and emergency medical services providers. The RIAFC scholarship program is funded by a 2012 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant through the Department of Homeland Security.

All funds earmarked for this program shall be maintained to ensure available funding for department participants through the conclusion in this program.

Program Description

The goal of this program is to attract new volunteer emergency responders to the Rhode Island fire service. RIAFC will offer Firefighter 1 training travel expenses, NFPA 1582 physical expenses, and PPE reimbursement for at least 50 newly recruited volunteer emergency responders each year throughout the 4 year grant period.

Program Reimbursement Options:

Each eligible volunteer emergency responder recruited after April 3rd, 2013 may receive reimbursement for their NFPA 1582 compliant physical and for travel expenses to attend Firefighter 1 training for up to \$1,100, including expenses for mileage, lost wages, federal per diem rate for meals, and GSA rate lodging.

The volunteer must commit to membership at a Rhode Island volunteer or combination fire department for a minimum of 12 months.

Within the first 12 months of appointment to the department, newly recruited volunteers must meet the minimum fire and EMS training requirements of that department, and within 12 months complete Firefighter 1.

For volunteers accepted under this program, every sponsoring Department/Agency will be reimbursed for each newly recruited volunteer's NFPA 1582 compliant physical upon receipt of a passing certificate. Whenever possible, departments will cover these training expenses or facilitate training in-house. The volunteer will incur out of pocket expenses toward this scholarship and request reimbursement of these expenses after the fact.*

Once each volunteer in this program passes their physical and Firefighter 1, and their Fire Chief produces certificates for both to the RIAFC's project coordinator, the department is then eligible for a reimbursement of \$2,000 towards the cost to purchase SAFER eligible NFPA compliant turnouts (PPE).

**Receipt of grant monies in either capacity may have tax consequences. Please consult your tax advisor PRIOR to participation in this program.*

Scholarship Application Process

Following are the steps intended to process a volunteer candidate through the RIAFC SAFER program:

Step 1: Candidate completes the membership process with a RI volunteer/combo department and the RIAFC SAFER Application Form.

Step 2: Upon obtaining the signature of the Sponsoring Department/Agency's Chief/Commissioner/Director, the Fire Chief forwards the completed RIAFC SAFER Application Form to the RIAFC office. Each application will be acknowledged by RIAFC and an approximate date of final determination will be included.

Step 3: After each semi-annual deadline the RIAFC SAFER Committee will review the Application Forms, verify the facts, then decide who will receive the award. All applicants will be sent a letter of determination approximately 4-6 weeks after the deadline.

Step 4: The volunteer granted the award obtains a confirmation from the RIAFC SAFER Committee and begins the training program on a part-time or full-time basis.

Step 5: RIAFC and the department fire chiefs will act as the clearinghouse to monitor the volunteer's training and volunteer service progress throughout the entire program.

Program Eligibility

The following is a list of program guidelines set forth in the SAFER grant narrative and must be adhered to by RIAFC and all participants:

1. Provide proof of membership to a RI volunteer or combination fire department or emergency services agency.
2. Newly recruited volunteers must be at least 18 years old by the semi-annual application review dates, either June 30th or December 31st of each year.
3. For each scholarship awarded, the volunteer must commit to a minimum of 12 months membership to a volunteer fire department.
4. Volunteer or paid-call firefighters who work part time for the department and are paid an average of less than 20 hours per week are eligible.
5. Volunteers who obtain a career firefighter job during the time of commitment must still fulfill their volunteer role in a department for a minimum of 12 months.
6. Volunteers must remain an active volunteer in good standing with the Sponsoring Department/Agency, and respond to at least 25 percent of the department's calls or operational activities as established by the Sponsoring Department/Agency.
7. Volunteers must commit to completing Firefighter 1 within 12 months of becoming a volunteer. Rhode Island's Firefighter 1 Certification program is administered through the state.
8. Volunteers must submit a RIAFC Application Form. Upon approval by the Chief/Commissioner/Director, the application is then sent to the RIAFC SAFER Committee to be reviewed. The Chief's signature is required.
9. Applicant's Chief/Commissioner/Director must sign the Reimbursement Form after each stage to collect reimbursement for physical/training/PPE expenses.
10. Applications must meet criteria guidelines to be considered for an award.

Award Selection Criteria

General Eligibility:

The RIAFC SAFER Committee will review all applications and other forms to approve or decline award eligibility. Although applications can be received year around, the RIAFC SAFER Committee will review the applications on a semi-annual basis using June 30th and December 31st as deadlines.

Being accepted into the membership of the sponsoring department does not guarantee the volunteer will be awarded a scholarship under the RIAFC SAFER program; satisfying these criteria simply makes them eligible for an award.

The RIAFC SAFER Committee has developed the following criteria for final award selection:

1. Individual department/agency: (i.e. Applications are reviewed to ensure that at least one volunteer application from each department represented in the application pool will be considered for an award).
2. Intra-department/agency: (i.e. if, based upon the application pool, funding limits require applicants from the same department to compete with each other, the volunteer with the greatest financial need (as recommended by the Fire Chief) will receive priority).
3. Inter-department/agency: (i.e. if, based upon the application pool, funding limits require applicants from one department/agency to compete with another, the department with the greatest need will receive priority).
4. Preference will be given to departments who are members of the RIAFC.
5. Preference will be given to post-9/11 Veterans in an effort to support these dedicated service members and the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011.
6. Candidates will not be discriminated against based on race or gender. In order to help the volunteer firefighter population better reflect the gender and racial diversity of the state population as a whole, at least 30% of these awards will go to women and minorities first to fulfill the SAFER grant requirements.

Service and Education Commitment

The RIAFC SAFER scholarship program is a federally funded FEMA grant. This fact means that the accepted applicant and RIAFC MUST follow and adhere to requirements set forth in the grant award package. The grant was awarded to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters in Rhode Island.

For an accepted applicant to receive any reimbursement from this SAFER grant DHS has required the following stipulations:

As a special condition to the award, the awardee must agree to and understand the following stipulations with regards to purchasing PPE/Turnout gear with grant funds:

- *Turnout gear is only for newly recruited (after 4/3/2013) volunteer members;*
- *Newly recruited members must obtain and pass the physical prior to requesting grant funds for the gear. Documentation of completed physicals will be required prior to funds being disbursed; and*
- *The newly recruited member(s) must complete Firefighter-1 level training within 12 months or by the end of the Period of Performance 4/3/2017 – whichever comes first. Documentation of the completed training will be required at time of closeout.*

IMPORTANT: This is a reimbursement program. All major requirements must be met before reimbursement can be made. The grant performance period ends 4/3/2017. We must disburse all reimbursement funds by this date.

Required documents and reporting:

The training records will be needed to document service requirements. The Sponsoring Department/Agency should keep all training records for active members. A copy of the 1582 compliant physical and Firefighter 1 certificate will be required as proof of completion.

The Chief/Commissioner/Director of the Sponsoring Department/Agency will be required to complete their designated portion of the Scholarship Application Form verifying department membership. We reserve the right to contact the Sponsoring Department/Agency's Chief/Commissioner/Director for additional information and/or we may require additional written updates from the Chief/Commissioner/Director.

The volunteer must submit a Reimbursement Form for all Firefighter 1 training travel expenses including expenses for mileage, lost wages, federal per diem rate for meals, and GSA rate lodging incurred during that reimbursement period. This form MUST be signed by the Chief.

The volunteer must provide the RIAFC SAFER Committee with their original bill's and receipts (photocopies are not accepted). Original bills are necessary for effectively documenting reimbursements of federal grant monies. All reimbursement requirements must be completed before 4/3/2017.

**All applicable local, state or federal laws and regulations shall supersede the procedures and conditions outlined in this administrative guide. These guidelines are subject to change without notice.*

Program Contacts

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