

RIAFC

Physicals, PPE, and Training Reimbursements

for Volunteer Emergency Responders

Administrative Guide



Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs Foundation

2018 SAFER Grant for Recruiting
New Volunteer Emergency Responders

December 10, 2019

Introduction

The Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs Foundation's (RIAFC) scholarship program was developed 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 2018 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 & 2 and Hazmat training travel expenses, NFPA 1582 physical expenses, and PPE reimbursement for at least 25 newly recruited Volunteer Emergency Responders each year throughout the 4-year grant period.

Program Reimbursement Options:

Each eligible Volunteer Emergency Responder recruited after December 10, 2019 may receive reimbursement for their NFPA 1582 compliant physical and for travel expenses to attend Firefighter 1 & 2 and Hazmat training for up to a total of \$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 may incur out of pocket expenses toward this scholarship and can 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 \$3,200 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.*

Physicals, PPE, and Training Reimbursement Process

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

Step 1: The New Recruit completes the membership process with a RI volunteer/combo department.

Step 2: The Fire Chief forwards the completed RIAFC SAFER Grant Reimbursement Request form to the Grant Manager once all requirements are met.

Step 3: To receive reimbursement, recipients must provide the following documentation to support the purchase of PPE:

- Invoices/proof of payment for PPE.
- Proof that the firefighter(s) have passed an NFPA 1582 compliant physical and are certified as "fit for duty."
- The newly recruited member must complete or be enrolled in Firefighter-1 level training (or departmental equivalent) prior to receiving reimbursement for PPE.
- A statement from the Fire Chief certifying that each new volunteer met the minimum training requirements in your jurisdiction (or will meet them prior to the end of the grant).

Step 4: The RIAFC SAFER Grant Manager will review the Request forms as they come in, verify the facts, then submit the request for payment to FEMA.

Step 5: Once the funds are received from FEMA (usually 4-6 weeks after submission), then the RIAFC SAFER Grant Manager will send a check to the department.

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 at the time of the reimbursement request.
3. For each request 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. The Volunteer's Chief/Commissioner/Director must sign the Reimbursement Form after each stage to collect reimbursement for physical/training/PPE expenses.

9. The Volunteer must submit a Reimbursement Form for all Firefighter 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 their invoices and receipts. Invoices are necessary for effectively documenting reimbursements of federal grant monies. All reimbursement requirements must be completed before 12/9/2023.
10. **IMPORTANT:** This is a reimbursement program. All major requirements must be met before reimbursement can be made. The grant performance period ends 12/9/2023. We must disburse all reimbursement funds by this date.

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

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.

**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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RIAFC SAFER Committee Members

Chief Stuart Pearson	President of the RIAFC Foundation
Chief Rick Petrin	Vice President
Kim Dawson	Secretary
Chief Bob Bradley	Director
Chief Mike Gingell	Director
Chief Jim Sousa	Director
Chief Scott Partington	RIAFC President
Bill Giannini	Treasurer
Rick Susi	RIAFC Executive Director
Chief Justin Lee	SAFER Committee Member