



Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Applicant Guide

The purpose of this guide is to assist fire departments/districts in the completion of the Kansas Volunteer Fire Assistance application. Please answer every question and fill in every blank on the application form. Leaving questions unanswered will be considered an incomplete application, subject to rejection. The new online application will not let you proceed with unanswered questions.

About the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program

The purpose of the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) Program, is to provide Federal financial, technical, and other assistance to State Foresters and other appropriate officials to equip, train, and organize fire departments in rural areas and rural communities to prevent and suppress fires. A rural community is defined as having 10,000 or less population and maybe incorporated, unincorporated, a township or some other identifiable descriptor.

Applications for a VFA grant may be placed for various types of fire prevention, suppression or communication equipment. However, wildland PPE, or communication equipment or purchases that will serve on both a wildfire and a structure fire are usually funded first. The rules of the program are basically five in number.

1. *VFA purchases have to be fire related.* Medical equipment or gear cannot be purchased with VFA funds. Rescue and extrication equipment are permitted, as long as rescue is an official mission of the department/district, but they are not first priority for the program.

2. *Structural equipment purchases are not specifically prohibited; however, they may not rank as high as wildland equipment.* Applications for funding to convert FEPP/FFP equipment is encouraged, and may be used in a variety of areas such as adding tanks, pumps and fire suppression equipment. The purchase of wildfire or urban interface apparatus, tools and appliances is encouraged. Items that are normal maintenance or replacement, such as tires, oil, replacement parts, etc. are discouraged.

3. *VFA funding is not authorized for the purchase, construction, or renovation of capital improvements such as fire stations, communication towers, internet, or pressurized water systems.*

4. *Training material may be purchased utilizing VFA funds to include computers.*

5. *Currently, no single award will exceed \$4999.00 of federal/KFS share.*

If there are questions about whether the project or equipment purchases meets the guidelines of the VFA program, call or email Eric Ward, eward@ksu.edu, 785-532-3307.

Be sure to fill in the fire department's OFFICIAL name and identifying number (FDID). An FDID number is assigned to fire departments by the Office of the State Fire Marshal (785-296-3401) for the purpose of fire reporting. The FDID consists of the 2 letter county abbreviation followed by a three-digit number (RL303 for example). Some departments may not have an individual FDID assigned to them if they work with another organization that submits fire reports for them. *If this is the case with your department, the application will be viewed as part the same department/district and thus ineligible for the second grant.*

Applications must be submitted no later than the printed deadline to receive full consideration in the review process. If the VFA grant funds are received prior to the printed deadline, applications postmarked after that deadline will not be considered.

Qualification Criteria: Defines who is eligible and how grant funds be utilized.

Application Identification: Projects submitted by a group of departments/districts working together may be given special consideration if, the share provided by each participating districts is explained in the narrative. If this applies to your project, be sure to list the departments involved in the project. Departments that apply as part of a group or stations that are part of a county wide fire department may not submit individual applications, as only one application per department is allowed.

Evaluation Criteria:

Questions 1 through 18: These questions are used to determine eligibility for receiving a grant. Before each grant is reviewed it is assumed it will receive 100% of the credit possible. From there, credits will be reduced for the final determination.

Project Request: List the items you wish to purchase, the cost per item/unit, the quantity, the total for each item and the project total. If you wish to purchase more than 9 different items/units, you should submit details on those additional items via email.

DO NOT UNDER ESTIMATE THE COST OF YOUR PROJECT, HOWEVER, OBVIOUS PADDING CAN RESULT IN A DENIAL OF THE ENTIRE APPLICATION. Remember that the department is responsible for 50% the Project. Requests for large projects from a single department may not be funded entirely.

Narrative: OPTIONAL- Keep it to the point, explain how the purchases will be utilized and describe the benefits to the department/districts and their constituents. This is especially important if the project is something out of the ordinary. The better the project is explained, the better the chances of it being funded, especially if two applications are very close. *"It will help us fight fire better", doesn't really tell us anything I don't already know, so be specific as to the need/benefit.*

Signatures: The application must be signed by both the authorized representative. If your fiscal officer is a city/county/township officer, please include their title. Whoever signs the application represents that they are authorized to approve the purchases, and to commit the local share of the funding.

Contact Information: This information is very important to ensure we are able to contact you in a timely manner. Please provide contact information for the person who will be acting as your primary contact for the purposes of administering this grant, whether it is the fire chief, assistant chief, treasurer, etc. As personnel can change during the course of a year, we need a mailing address of the fire department itself, and not an individual.

General Information: All applicants will receive a response regarding the outcome of an application (award or denial). Successful applicants will receive a detailed letter stating how much was awarded, what can be purchased, what paperwork needs to be submitted for reimbursement and a completion deadline. If the department encounters an emergency and needs to purchase something other than what is listed as an approved purchase on the award letter, it must be approved by the KFS Fire Management Officer prior to the purchase being made.

Award Amount: Will include two figures, a total award and the (KFS/Federal) share, which is 50% of the total award. Since the program is a “reimbursement” program, the department must be able to fund the entire award prior to receiving the reimbursement. Applicants will not be penalized for spending more than the awarded amount, but no cost-share will be granted beyond the stated Federal share. Also, if the final cost of the project is less than the total award, the (KFS/Federal) share will be 50% of the actual final project cost. For example, if \$4000 is awarded but \$5000 is the final cost, the (KFS/Federal) share will still be just 50% of the awarded amount, or \$2000. If \$4000 is awarded and the final cost is only \$3000, the (KFS/ Federal) share will be adjusted down to \$1500, half of the actual final cost.

Paperwork required: Following completion of your purchases, submit copies of invoices provided by the company, copies of warrants or cancelled checks or Notarized Affidavit and the Front page of a completed (including signature) W9 form by the deadline for the project as stated in the award letter. The small photocopy of your check sent by your bank will be sufficient. The W9 must be signed the same year as the reimbursement request.

Deadlines: In the event your department submits a successful application, it is vital that the purchasing process begin immediately. If you wait too long, you run the risk of losing your award if it is not completed by the final deadline. A number of circumstances can result in a department not being able to meet the grant deadline, don't make procrastination one of them. Successful applicants should have ample time to make purchases, usually 5-6 months. It is suggested that the department have a list ready to make the purchases when the award is received. Unless a written request for extension is approved, all reimbursement requests must be submitted no later than 12/31/2024, after which any unclaimed funds will be redistributed.

For more information, contact:

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