

Volunteer Fire Assistance Frequently Asked Questions

What IS Volunteer Fire Assistance, anyway?

Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) is a Federal grant program that provides funds for fire equipment, training, and initial fire department organization to fire departments serving small communities under 10,000 in population.

Where do these grant dollars come from?

Congressionally appropriated VFA funds are provided to the State forestry agencies through the USDA Forest Service. The State forestry agencies pass this money on to needful fire departments within their states.

Who may apply for VFA grants?

Any fire agency or volunteer fire department that serves a community of 10,000 or less may apply.

Who qualifies for VFA grants?

State forestry agencies establish criteria defining priorities based on need. Each fire department grant request is compared to the criteria and grants are allocated to meet the greatest needs for equipment, training, or organizational assistance.

What may a small department do with VFA grant dollars?

A department may buy fire equipment, pay for training or training materials, or cover the cost of department incorporation, as long as the funds are matched. VFA funds are granted on a 50/50 matching basis. In other words, the department must match the dollars, dollar for dollar, in money, time, or equipment.

Do all States offer exactly the same program?

Most States have similar programs, but they may offer different amounts of funds per applicant; some may directly pay training cost for certain types of training, and others may place the funds toward projects that assist small rural departments. In every case, VFA funds directly benefit small departments serving populations of 10,000 or less.

How large are most VFA grants?

Most grants are \$5,000 or less. Actual amounts depend on the VFA funding allocated to the particular State, which in turn depends on Congressional action.

Where can I get more information on VFA grants and how to apply in my State?

Since you are on the web, your best option is to click on **National Association of State Foresters Membership Directory**, You will find a complete directory of State forestry agencies. From there you can e-mail your State forester or locate the phone number for the State headquarters. You may also contact the **State VFA manager**.

What if I need more money to build a fire station or make other major capital expenditures?

The USDA has a low-interest loan program to help communities with just such issues. For more information, click on **USDA Rural Development** or call the agency at 202-720-4323.