Funding Opportunities: Firefighting Gear and Equipment

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Vermont's fire departments perform critical and dangerous work, often in a volunteer capacity. Below are funding opportunities for gear and equipment that we have identified to support their efforts. Another VLCT resource, Funding Opportunities: Fire Station Construction, may interest you too.

Consult program-specific guidance for additional information. Links to other sites offered in this document are provided to assist municipalities: the inclusion of a link does not imply endorsement or approval of the linked site or product.

Funding Opportunities

PACIF Grants – Municipalities that are members of VLCT PACIF can apply for turnout gear, SCBA equipment, EMS clothing, and other emergency services protective gear. These items are covered only one time per member. Repeat requests for the same type of emergency services protective gear are not eligible. These requests are limited to a maximum reimbursement of $1,000, to give more members an opportunity to take advantage of the grant program.

Vermont Wildland Fire Gear Grant - Funds gear and equipment used to fight wildland fires. Awards up to $3,000. Towns/departments awarded funds through this program will purchase their own gear and equipment and submit receipts for reimbursement.

FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) – The AFG helps firefighters and other first responders obtain critically needed equipment, protective gear, emergency vehicles, training, and other resources necessary for protecting the public and emergency personnel from fire and related hazards. Awards are up to $1 million.

USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program – Provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas, which is defined as a community with a population up to 20,000. Examples of

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essential community facilities include health care facilities; public facilities; community support services; public safety services; educational service providers such as museums and libraries; private schools; utility services such as telemedicine or distance learning equipment; and local food systems. Projects might receive a grant, loan, or grant/loan combination. We recommend discussing projects with USDA staff prior to applying.

Firefighter Property Program – The Firefighter Property Program (FFP) refers to one of the Department of Defense's (DoD) special programs where firefighters can get excess DoD property to be used for firefighting and emergency services. Certain property obtained from this program passes ownership after it has been in use for a specified period. This program is managed by the Forest Service with the cooperation of the state forestry agencies. Contact the State forester for information.

Vermont Electric Coop Community Fund – Focus areas are economic security, emergency/disaster relief, community support/development and food security. Applications accepted on a rolling basis with award decision made quarterly. Preference is given to organizations operating in the VEC service territory. Grants range from $100 to $1,000 with exceptions on a case-by-case basis. Nonprofit fire departments are eligible; it is unclear whether municipal departments are eligible.

Gary Sinise Foundation First Responder Grant – Funds equipment and training for law enforcement, fire departments, and paramedic/EMS departments to ensure that first responders can perform their job optimally. Prioritizes volunteer and underfunded departments. The website does not provide much information. Vermont municipalities have received these grants.

Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation – Supports first responder lifesaving equipment, including but not limited to vehicle extrication tools, automated external defibrillators (AEDs), bunker gear, thermal imaging cameras, automated chest

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compression systems, vehicle stabilization struts, bulletproof vests, all-terrain vehicles, and fire hoses. Also funds prevention education, scholarships and continuing education, and disaster relief. Average funding range is $15,000 to $25,000. The maximum award is $40,000. 600 applications are accepted quarterly, so apply early in the quarter. Applicants that receive an award must wait a minimum of three years before reapplying. Matching funds are not required. Primarily funds projects within 60 miles of a Firehouse Subs restaurant (Williston, VT or find a location in an adjacent state) but applications from rural and volunteer departments outside that range are considered. A Vermont municipality was awarded one of these grants in 2022.

Firefighters Charitable Foundation – Provides funding for equipment, supplies, maintenance, repairs, and training for volunteer fire departments and law enforcement agencies. Areas of giving include automatic external defibrillators, fire department equipment program, community smoke detector program, and juvenile firesetter prevention and intervention program. The website does not provide much information. The foundation's newsletter has grant thank you letters from other states, so the foundation does provide grants outside of its home state of New York.

National Volunteer Fire Council Good Neighbor Firefighter Safety Program - Helps resource-constrained volunteer fire departments secure needed equipment to enhance safety, effectiveness, and operational readiness. Warranties, training costs, sales tax, and shipping costs specifically for the requested equipment can be included in the request. The grant may be used to complete a larger equipment purchase if the 4-month spending deadline can be met, and it may be used for maintenance, repairs, or upgrades to existing equipment if the work improves safety, functionality, or extends the usable life of the item and is directly related to improving firefighter safety and readiness. Awards are $10,000. State Farm also provide one-year NVFC memberships to the first 2,000 eligible applicants to give them access to the full range of NVFC benefits. Departments must be over 50% volunteer; paid on-call is considered volunteer and must serve a population of 25,000 or less. Gross

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revenue for the department's most recently completed fiscal year must not have exceeded $250,000. Match is not required. Multiple Vermont fire departments have received funding through this source.

State Farm Good Neighbor Citizenship Company Grant – Provides grants in three focus areas: safety, community development, and education. Grants are directed toward automobile and roadway safety, home safety and fire prevention, disaster preparedness, disaster recovery, and personal financial safety and security. The application process begins with an online support request. This can lead to an invitation to apply.

FM Foundation Fire Service Grant Program – Provides financial support to develop, upgrade, and implement effective pre-incident plans that enhance readiness and response strategies. This includes funding for technology, training, equipment, and other critical components that contribute to the development of detailed, actionable plans tailored to the unique needs and risks of their respective communities. Grant funds may be used for a variety of purposes, including but not limited to: acquisition of pre-incident planning software and technologies; training and workshops for personnel on effective planning techniques; development of detailed maps, blueprints, and databases of high-risk areas; and conducting risk assessments and simulations to refine response strategies. Maximum funding is $5,000. Applications open annually and remain open until 300 applications are received.

The Leary Firefighters Foundation Jeremiah Lucey Grant Program – Provides grants for training, equipment, and technology to both paid and volunteer departments. Grant size varies but typically ranges from $5,000 to $35,000. Letters of Inquiry required; applications by invitation only. Annual applications cycle.

TC Energy Foundation funds equipment, training, and emergency preparedness and response activities for first responders located in or providing services to Essex

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County, Vermont. Applications are accepted rolling basis from late January to early November or until funding has been fully allocated, whichever comes first. Organizations requesting local or community-level support must be located in or providing service in a TC Energy community. Assists through grants, in-kind assistance (use of their people or equipment), or sponsorship.

Congressional Appropriation - Congressional appropriations were formerly known as Earmarks and are currently known as Congressionally Directed Spending for the Senate and Community Project Funding for the House of Representatives. Projects are nominated by Members of Congress for funding through the appropriations bill. The Senate and House have different rules for these requests. Projects benefit from advanced discussion with Congressional staff. If selected, funds pass through a federal agency with that agency's associated grant terms and conditions. Funds may not be available for 1-4 years based on agency capacity. Information is available on websites of Senator Sanders, Senator Welch, and Representative Balint. Projects are usually submitted in late February through mid-March annually.

Where to Find Help

Municipalities are welcome to use VLCT's *Ask a Project Pro* service to discuss potential funding sources for a project or for project development advice. Through this service, VLCT narrows funding opportunities to those most pertinent to a project, saving municipalities time and resources. We also provide coaching for project development and grant management.

Many municipalities lack capacity for grant writing and administration. VLCT published a resource, *Increasing Municipal Capacity for Grants*, that offers ideas for assistance with grants.

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