

PROGRAM GUIDANCE
VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY AND VOLUNTEER AMBULANCE SERVICE GRANT PROGRAM
STATE FISCAL YEAR 2011-12

Section 1. Introduction.

(a) The Volunteer Fire Company and Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program (program) provides grants to improve and enhance the capabilities of volunteer fire companies and volunteer ambulance services throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Commonwealth) to provide firefighting, ambulance and rescue services. Program funds may be used for projects that are in accordance with Act 17 of 2003, as amended. Eligible projects are defined in Sections 3(a)(2) and (b)(2) (relating to eligibility).

(b) Assistance from the program is in the form of grants from the Commonwealth to eligible volunteer fire companies and volunteer ambulance services for projects which, in the judgment of the Agency, comply with Act 17 of 2003, as amended, and are in accordance with this Program Guidance, the program guidelines in this chapter and meet all Volunteer Fire Company and Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Application criteria found in the application.

(c) Grants will be not less than \$2,500 and not more than \$15,000 per applicant volunteer fire company nor more than \$10,000 per applicant volunteer ambulance service, except as noted in Section 3(a)(3) and (b)(3).

(d) Applicants should be aware that the program expects to receive a large number of applications for the limited funds appropriated from the State Gaming Fund. As such, it is possible that not every application can be fully funded, in which case grants will be awarded on a prorated basis.

(e) The program expenditures will be charged to funds appropriated to the Volunteer Fire Company and Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program by section 1720-C(c) of The Fiscal Code.

Section 2. Definitions.

The following words and terms, when used in this chapter, have the following meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

Act--Act 17 of 2003, as amended.

Advanced Life Support--The advanced prehospital and interhospital emergency medical care of serious illness or injury by appropriately trained health professionals and by certified EMT-paramedics.

Agency--The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

Application--The Volunteer Fire Company and Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program Application.

Basic Life Support Services--Prehospital or interhospital emergency medical care and management of illness or injury performed by specially trained and certified or licensed personnel.

Certification--Any class of instruction or test that will provide certification at any level that is currently offered in the Commonwealth through the Voluntary Fire Fighter Certification program administered by the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy.

Certified Personnel--Any member of the fire or rescue company who is certified at a minimum level of Fire Fighter 1 on or before July 1, 2011 by the National Professional Qualifications Board or by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress and verified by the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy.

Commissioner--The State Fire Commissioner.

Equipment--Any apparatus, equipment or tools ordinarily used by a fire, rescue or ambulance service in the performance of their duties.

Facility--A structure or portion thereof intended for the purpose of storage or protection of firefighting apparatus, ambulances or rescue vehicles and related equipment and gear. The repair, renovation or construction of sleeping quarters (bunk rooms) is also included as an authorized expenditure. The term does not include meeting halls, social halls, social rooms, lounges or any other facility not directly related to firefighting or the furnishing of ambulance or rescue services.

Final Report--The report to be filed as provided in Section 6 of these Guidelines by the volunteer fire company or volunteer ambulance services detailing the expenditure of the funds granted.

Grant Program--The Volunteer Fire Company and Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program.

Invalid Coach--A vehicle which is primarily maintained, operated and intended to be used for routine transport of persons who are convalescent or otherwise nonambulatory and do not ordinarily require emergency medical treatment while in transit. Such vehicles shall not be considered ambulance or emergency medical service vehicles.

OSFC--Office of the State Fire Commissioner.

Regional or Joint Project--A cooperative agreement wherein any combination of three (3) or more separately chartered fire or rescue companies agree to use all or any portion of their respective grant request to jointly complete any project that qualifies under the Act.

Volunteer Ambulance Service--Any nonprofit chartered corporation, association or organization located in the Commonwealth, which is licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Health and is not associated or affiliated with any hospital and which is regularly engaged in the provision of emergency medical services, including basic life support or advanced life support services and advanced life support squads as defined in 28 Pa. Code § 1005.1 (relating to general provisions). The term shall not include any corporation, association or organization that is primarily engaged in the operation of invalid coaches which are intended for the routine transport of persons who are convalescent or otherwise nonambulatory and do not ordinarily require emergency medical treatment while in transit.

Volunteer Fire Company--A nonprofit chartered corporation, association or organization located in the Commonwealth which provides fire protection services and which may offer other voluntary emergency services within the Commonwealth. Voluntary emergency services provided by a volunteer fire company may include voluntary ambulance and voluntary rescue services.

Volunteer Rescue Company--A nonprofit chartered corporation, association or organization located in the Commonwealth that provides rescue services as part of the response to fires and/or vehicle accidents within the Commonwealth.

Section 3. Eligibility.

(a) Volunteer Fire Company Grant

(1) Eligible applicants. A volunteer fire company as defined in Section 2. However, to receive grant funds a volunteer fire company shall have actively responded to one or more fire or rescue emergencies during the previous calendar year. The volunteer fire company shall also sign a written agreement to participate in and report information using the Pennsylvania Fire Information Reporting System (PennFIRS).

(2) Eligible projects. Program funds may be used for projects that are consistent with Act 17 of 2003, as amended. Eligible projects must improve and enhance the capabilities of the volunteer fire company to provide firefighting, ambulance or rescue services. Eligible projects are:

- (i) Construction and/or renovation of the fire company's primary structure facility and purchase or repair of fixtures and furnishings necessary to maintain or improve the capability of the company to provide fire, ambulance and rescue services;
- (ii) Purchase of firefighting, ambulance or rescue equipment or repair thereof;
- (iii) Debt reduction associated with already completed projects eligible under subsection (i) and (ii); or
- (iv) Training and certification of members.

Eligible projects initiated on or after July 1st 2011 and completed prior to disbursement of grant program funds may be considered as eligible projects for the current grant year.

(3) When two or more fire companies have consolidated their use of equipment, firefighters and services within five years preceding the date of the current year application submission deadline, the consolidated entity may be deemed eligible to receive a grant not to exceed the amount of the combined total for which the individual companies would have been eligible had they not consolidated.

(b) Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant

(1) Eligible applicants. A volunteer ambulance service as defined in Section 2.

(2) Eligible projects. Program funds may be used for projects that are consistent with Act 17 of 2003, as amended. Eligible projects must improve and enhance the capability of the ambulance service to provide ambulance, emergency medical, basic life support or advanced life support services. Eligible projects are:

- (i) Construction and/or renovation of the volunteer ambulance service's primary structure facility and purchase or repair of fixtures and furnishings necessary to maintain or improve the capability of the company to provide ambulance, emergency medical, basic life support and advanced life support services;
- (ii) Purchase of ambulance or rescue equipment or repair thereof;
- (iii) Debt reduction associated with already completed projects eligible under subsection (i) and (ii); or
- (iv) Training and certification of members.

Eligible projects initiated after July 1st 2011, and completed prior to disbursement of grant program funds may be considered as eligible projects for the current grant year.

(3) When two or more ambulance services have consolidated their use of equipment, emergency medical technicians, paramedics and services within five years preceding the date of the current year application submission deadline, the consolidated entity may be deemed eligible to receive a grant not to exceed the amount of the combined total for which the individual services (companies) would have been eligible had they not consolidated.

Section 4. Program Requirements and Instructions.

(a) The following requirements apply to the program:

(1) Project applications for the grants shall be submitted using either the online web based application process or the paper forms provided by the Agency. The Agency will provide information about the application process for grants to every volunteer fire company and every volunteer ambulance service in the Commonwealth. Applications will also be available from the Office of the State Fire Commissioner and on the OSFC's website. Addresses and phone numbers are listed in Section 5 (relating to application submission and approval procedure).

(2) The Agency reserves the right to:

- (i) Request additional information regarding an organization's eligibility;
- (ii) Request additional information regarding proposed use of funds;
- (iii) Require explanation or revision of the applicant's project budget; and
- (iv) Require clarification of the applicant's project narrative.

(3) Incomplete applications will be rejected. An applicant shall carefully follow the instructions for completing either the online or the paper form of the application. Specific information is required as indicated on both the online application and the paper form. Applications not containing required information will be considered incomplete.

(4) The Project Narrative shall provide a detailed and comprehensive description of the project and must include:

- (i) Description of the project(s);
- (ii) Benefits to be realized from the project; and
- (iii) Grant funds to be expended on the project.

Section 5. Application Submission and Approval Procedure.

(a) The Agency will mail information detailing the grant application process to volunteer fire companies and volunteer ambulance services throughout the Commonwealth. The application will also be available by calling the Office of the State Fire Commissioner at 800-670-3473, or on the OSFC's website at www.osfc.state.pa.us. Applications shall be submitted to the Office of the State Fire Commissioner, either online at www.osfc.state.pa.us or in the case of paper forms, at 2605 Interstate Drive, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9364.

(1) The application process involves gathering applicant information and verifying that applicant projects are eligible for grant funding. The agency will provide an online Web based process to gather the additional applicant information and verify project eligibility. The agency will provide written information to every volunteer fire company and ambulance service regarding the grant program guidelines and the availability of the online applicant information/project eligibility verification process.

Paper submissions will be accepted. At the time the availability of the online grant application process is announced, the OSFC will provide information about how to obtain a paper form to submit the required

application and project eligibility information. Information will also be available from the Office of the State Fire Commissioner and on the OSFC's website.

(b) A volunteer fire company or a volunteer ambulance service seeking a grant under this program shall submit a completed online or paper form of the grant application to the Office of the State Fire Commissioner. The application period will remain open for 45 days each year.

(c) Completed applications shall be submitted to the Office of the State Fire Commissioner no later than 4:00 PM Eastern Daylight Saving Time October 21, 2011.

(d) The agency shall act to approve or disapprove applications within 60 days of the application submission deadline each year. Applications received by the Agency, which have not been approved or disapproved by the December 20, 2011, shall be deemed approved, subject to the provisions of Act 17 of 2003, as amended.

(e) Grant award determinations

(1) Volunteer Fire Company Grants

(i) A volunteer fire company as defined in Section 2 that actively responded to one or more fire or rescue emergencies during the previous calendar year and agrees to actively participate in the Pennsylvania Fire Information Reporting System will be eligible for a base award which will be a portion of the applicants grant request. (In previous single-year grant programs this base award has been \$9,500.00.)

(ii) Additional grant funds will be awarded to eligible applicants by applying an award factor to that portion of the applicant's grant request which exceeds the base award. The award factor is determined by dividing the applicant's bonus points by fifteen (15), the highest possible number of points.

Award factor points:

Five (5) points will be awarded to an eligible fire or rescue service who uses the grant funding to perform a regional/joint project as found in the definitions.

One (1) point will be awarded for each person currently certified in accordance with the definitions in Section 2, to a maximum of 10 points.

(iii) If necessary, the resultant additional award will be prorated by a factor determined by dividing the total program funds remaining after the base awards have been determined by the total amount of funds requested in excess of the base awards so that all grant awards do not exceed the total grant funds available.

(iv) If funding is not fully distributed after this award factor calculation, the Agency reserves the right to adjust the award factor formula so that all grant funds available are distributed, subject to the provisions of Act 17 of 2003, as amended.

(v) Volunteer fire company grants to individual volunteer fire shall not exceed \$15,000.00.

(2) Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant

A volunteer ambulance service as defined in Section 2 will be eligible for a grant, not to exceed \$10,000.00, and prorated by a factor determined by dividing the total funds available by the total amount of funds requested so that all grant awards do not exceed the total grant funds available.

Section 6. Grant Award and Reporting Procedures.

(a) Grant award notifications will be made as follows:

(1) Applicants that apply for the grant using the online application process will be notified by e-mail.

(2) Applicants that apply for the grant using the paper form will be notified by letter.

(b) At the time grant recipients are notified of their award, and in the same manner, they will be presented with a grant agreement. This grant agreement will contain the details of the grant, including name of recipient, amount of award, project description and terms of the agreement. In the case of volunteer fire company grant recipients it will also include an agreement that they participate in PennFIRS. The grant agreement must be signed by an officer of the organization authorized to commit the recipient organization to the terms of the agreement and returned to the OSFC for execution by the Commonwealth before grant funds can be released.

(c) The applicant will maintain full and accurate records with respect to the project. The Agency will have free access to these records, including invoices of material and services, and other relative data and records, as well as the right to inspect all project work. The applicant shall furnish upon request of the Agency all data, reports,

contracts, documents and other information relevant to the project.

(d) The applicant shall, upon completion of the project, but no later than December 1, 2012, file a Final Report with the Agency in a manner and form prescribed by the OSFC. Any grant funds not expended by the applicant for the project shall be returned to the Agency prior to or with the filing of the Final Report. Failure to file a Final Report will be grounds for the Agency to seek the return of all grant funds awarded.

Section 7. Program Limitations.

(a) This section identifies program limitations that may result from the misuse of the grant funds.

(b) An applicant may not make or authorize changes exceeding ten percent (10%) of the total project cost to an approved project without first obtaining consent of the Agency in writing.

(c) The applicant agrees that noncompliance with the conditions of this grant shall be grounds for the recapture of funds provided to the applicant. If the applicant fails to refund the monies, the Commonwealth, in addition to any rights or remedies it may have at law or in equity, reserves the right to offset the amount due against any existing or future sums of money owed the applicant by any Commonwealth agency or department, including PEMA.

(d) PEMA, or its duly authorized representative, shall have access to the records of the applicant for the purpose of auditing financial transactions, determination of compliance with grant terms, and an evaluation of project performance.

(e) The applicant agrees to retain all cost supporting records and documentation for a period of three years from the date that it receives its final grant payment from PEMA.

Section 8. Special Provisions

(a) An applicant for a grant under this act who is delinquent in loan payments to the Pennsylvania Volunteer Loan Assistance Program: established under the act of July 15, 1976 (P.L. 1036. No. 208), known as the Volunteer Fire Volunteer Ambulance Service and Rescue Squad Assistance Act, shall agree to use its grant funds to pay any arrears to the Commonwealth or it will not be qualified to receive a grant. Any organization agreeing to this arrangement who fails to make payment to the Commonwealth shall be disqualified from applying to the grant program for a period of three years.

(b) An applicant for a grant under this act must demonstrate that it complied with all terms of its grant agreement in the previous year regarding the use of the grant money it received in previous years or it shall not be eligible to receive a grant in the current year.

(c) An applicant for a grant under this act who fails to return a signed grant agreement for any previous grant year, will not be permitted to apply for a grant in the current grant year (2011-12), unless the applicant provides the commissioner with a reasonable written explanation as to why it did not claim its grant.

Section 9. Contact Information.

All applicant inquiries should be directed to:

Office of the State Fire Commissioner
2605 Interstate Drive
Harrisburg, PA 17110-9364
Toll free - 800-670-3473
E-mail - ra-vfcvasgp@pa.gov