SAFE SIGNALS

Fire-service software

Muster Grant Funding Kit

Grant Programs, Application Templates, and Support for Fire Department Muster Deployments

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Muster — Grant Funding Kit for Fire Departments

Purpose: Identifies grant programs that would legitimately cover Muster licensing costs for volunteer and combination fire departments, documents the gaps Muster doesn't cover, and provides cookie-cutter application language departments can adapt.

Audience: Chiefs, department admins, and grant writers at prospective Muster customer departments. Also useful for Safe Signals to reference during chief conversations when grant funding is raised as a concern.

Status: v1.0, 2026-07-26 (federal-focused; state-specific supplements in development). Grant program details change annually — verify current requirements before applying.

Critical disclaimer: Grant eligibility is determined by the funding agency, not by Safe Signals. This kit provides research and application templates but does NOT guarantee grant approval. Departments should consult their state fire marshal or a professional grant writer for final applications.

Executive summary

Three grant programs are directly relevant to Muster licensing costs at volunteer and combination fire departments:

1. **FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG)** — federal, $324M annually, up to $1M per department, 5-10% cost share, covers response technology explicitly. **This is the primary funding target.**
2. **New York State V-FIRE Program** — state, $5M equipment track, up to $500K per department, no cost share, reimbursement-based, but has narrow eligibility scope that Muster fits only partially.
3. **AFG Fire Prevention & Safety (FP&S)** — federal, companion to AFG, focused on prevention/wellness/safety programming; Muster's exposure tracking and NFPA 1580 alignment can qualify under wellness/safety objectives.

Two additional programs are worth watching but less directly applicable:

4. **SAFER grants** — federal, focused on staffing not equipment. Not directly applicable to Muster licensing, but SAFER awards free up department budget for technology purchases.
5. **State Recruitment & Retention (R&R) grants** — NY state, $1M program. Not directly for software but volunteer recruitment/retention outcomes can be supported by Muster's PAR + accountability features.

Program 1: FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG)

This is the primary target for Muster funding. Every Muster-prospective department should apply.

Program basics

- **Administering agency:** DHS/FEMA
- **Assistance listing:** 97.044
- **Total available (FY 2026):** $324 million
- **Award ceiling:** Varies by department size and category (typically up to $1M for larger departments; volunteer departments typically request $10K-$100K)
- **Cost share:** 5% for volunteer/small departments in communities under 20,000 population; 10% for 20,000-1,000,000; 15% for larger communities
- **Application platform:** FEMA GO at go.fema.gov
- **Typical application window:** Opens late spring/early summer, closes 30-45 days later
- **FY 2026 window:** Opened May 19, 2026, closed June 22, 2026 (missed for this cycle; next window ~May 2027)

Eligibility for Muster licensing

AFG explicitly covers "response technology, tablets, mobile data terminals, station alerting systems, and response software" under equipment categories. This is documented in FEMA's own materials and by third-party grant consultants. Muster (as response management software + tablets to run it on) fits squarely within this category.

Specific AFG program objectives Muster satisfies:

- **Enhance operational efficiencies** (Muster's core purpose)
- **Foster interoperability** (mesh + federated relay enables multi-station and mutual aid coordination)
- **Recognized standards** (NFPA 1550 and NFPA 1580 alignment is exactly what AFG language rewards)
- **Firefighter safety** (Mayday, evacuation, PAR, ISO authority, exposure tracking all directly serve firefighter safety)

The six required narrative sections

AFG applications require six narrative sections. The following four are peer-reviewed and each represents 25% of the panel score:

1. **Financial Need** — prove budget shortfall is beyond department's control
2. **Project Description** — justify the technology request against identified risks
3. **Cost/Benefit** — demonstrate high-yield investment of federal dollars
4. **Statement of Effect** — detail how award improves daily life-saving operations

Two additional required sections:

5. **Critical Infrastructure** — identify high-risk areas in first-due response area
6. **Vulnerable Populations** — describe demographics served

Application checklist for Muster funding

- ☐ SAM.gov registration current (60-day expiration; check before applying)
- ☐ FEMA GO account active with correct department profile
- ☐ Cost share funds identified (typically 5% of total request for volunteer departments)
- ☐ Formal quotes from vendor (Safe Signals will provide; see "What Safe Signals provides" below)
- ☐ All six narrative sections drafted and reviewed
- ☐ Budget detailed to include software licensing, hardware (tablets, mounts, charging), installation, training, and recurring subscription costs
- ☐ Cost-benefit formula included in cost/benefit narrative
- ☐ Peer review of application by another chief before submission

What Safe Signals will provide

To support grant applications, Safe Signals will provide (at no cost to the department):

- Formal quote for Muster licensing at current tier pricing
- Product specification document referenceable in the application
- NFPA 1550 and NFPA 1580 alignment documentation
- Case study material once first departments have deployed (Q1 2027 timeframe)
- Cost-benefit calculation template
- Sample narrative language (see Templates section below)

Request these from Safe Signals at least 30 days before the grant deadline. Late requests may not be accommodated.

Common AFG rejection reasons

Based on FEMA guidance and third-party grant consultant data, common reasons AFG applications are rejected or receive low scores:

1. **Financial need not substantiated.** "Our budget is tight" is not enough. Applications must show specific funding shortfalls, tax cap limitations, failed bond proposals, unemployment statistics.
2. **Project description too generic.** Reviewers want specific local statistics, technical justification, references to recognized standards.
3. **Cost-benefit unclear.** Must include a specific formula (cost per call, cost divided by expected lifespan, cost per firefighter protected).
4. **Late submission.** No extensions are granted.
5. **SAM.gov registration expired.** Common technical disqualifier.
6. **Recurring costs omitted.** Software subscriptions must be included; grant covers only Year 1 typically, but the budget should show total cost.

Program 2: NY V-FIRE Grant Program (partial fit)

Applicable to NY volunteer fire departments only. More limited fit for Muster than AFG.

Program basics

- **Administering agency:** NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES)
- **Total available (SFY 2025-2026):** $25M total — $20M for facilities track, $5M for equipment track
- **Award ceiling:** Up to $500K for equipment track (up to $1M for facilities track)
- **Cost share:** None. No matching funds required.
- **Application platform:** Grants Management System at grantsmanagement.ny.gov
- **Payment model:** Reimbursement-based (department pays first, state reimburses)
- **Typical application window:** December through February
- **SFY 2025-2026 window closed March 11, 2026.** Next cycle likely SFY 2026-2027 opening December 2026.

Eligibility for Muster licensing

V-FIRE's equipment track is narrower than AFG. Explicit priority is:

- Personal protective equipment
- SCBAs
- Safety-related equipment and tools
- Wildland fire equipment
- Cost-share subsidy for AFG apparatus awards

Software is NOT explicitly listed as eligible under the equipment track. Departments applying for Muster licensing through V-FIRE should:

- Consult DHSES directly to confirm eligibility before submission
- Frame Muster as "safety-related equipment" (accountability systems, PAR, Mayday, ISO functions are objectively safety equipment)
- Consider bundling with tablets (which are more clearly hardware) rather than pure licensing

Critical eligibility requirement

All V-FIRE applicants must be current on NFIRS/NERIS reporting through DHSES OFPC. Departments behind on their reporting cannot apply.

This is a real gate. If a department is applying for Muster partly to help with NERIS reporting (Muster's Phase 7 NERIS submission connector will support this), they may not be eligible for V-FIRE funding to purchase it until they've caught up on their existing reporting.

V-FIRE application requirements

- Eligible applicant type (villages, towns, cities, fire districts, fire companies, counties for shared services)
- 100% volunteer status verified
- Current NERIS reporting
- New York State Vendor ID
- Registration with Grants Management System
- Narrative aligned to V-FIRE priorities

Realistic assessment

V-FIRE is worth mentioning to NY departments but should NOT be the primary funding pathway for Muster. The narrow equipment scope and the reimbursement model make it a poor fit compared to AFG. Departments should apply to AFG first; V-FIRE is a secondary option worth exploring only if AFG is unsuccessful.

Program 3: AFG Fire Prevention & Safety (FP&S)

Companion program to AFG, focused on prevention and wellness. Muster's exposure tracking and safety features can qualify.

Program basics

- **Administering agency:** DHS/FEMA
- **Assistance listing:** 97.044 (same as AFG)
- **Total available (FY 2026):** $34M (included in the $648M total DHS announcement)
- **Award ceiling:** Typically $1.5M for research; smaller for direct department awards
- **Cost share:** Same as AFG (5-15% depending on community size)
- **Application platform:** FEMA GO
- **Typical application window:** Same as AFG

Eligibility for Muster licensing

FP&S covers:

- Fire prevention education and training
- Fire code enforcement
- Fire/arson investigation
- **Firefighter safety and health programming**
- Strategic national projects
- Prevention research

Muster's exposure tracking (NFPA 1580 Ch 22, OSHA 1910.1020) aligns with "firefighter safety and health programming." Long-term exposure records enable cancer presumption documentation which is a growing chief priority.

Framing for FP&S applications:

- "Muster's exposure tracking module enables the department to comply with OSHA 1910.1020 30-year retention requirements for occupational exposure records."
- "NFPA 1580 Chapters 20-22 alignment supports firefighter wellness and rehabilitation cycles."
- "Long-term exposure documentation supports cancer presumption claims for firefighters diagnosed with presumptive cancers."

Realistic assessment

FP&S is a stronger fit than V-FIRE but more competitive than AFG. Best used as a secondary application if a department has both operational (AFG) and health/wellness (FP&S) technology needs.

Programs to be aware of but not directly applicable

SAFER Grants (federal)

- **Purpose:** Staffing — hiring and retention of firefighters
- **Not directly applicable to software** but SAFER recipients often free up department budget for technology purchases
- **Talking point:** "SAFER-funded departments can redirect budget from personnel toward operational technology"

NY State Recruitment & Retention (R&R) Grants

- **Total:** $1M annually
- **Purpose:** Recruitment/retention of volunteers
- **Muster relevance:** Volunteer recruitment materials can cite operational technology as a benefit of joining the department ("we run modern accountability systems that protect firefighters")
- **Not a direct funding source** but a potential secondary benefit

SFY2024-2025 Statewide Interoperable Communications Targeted Grant Program (SICG-Targeted)

- **Purpose:** Interoperable radio/dispatch communications
- **Muster relevance:** Muster's federated relay could arguably qualify as an interoperable communication tool for mutual aid scenarios
- **Application status:** Closed June 11, 2025; watch for next cycle

DHS/FEMA — other preparedness grants

Various grant programs under FEMA's preparedness directorate touch response technology tangentially:

- Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP)
- State Homeland Security Program (SHSP)
- Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI)

These are complex, competitive, and typically require multi-agency coordination. Not primary paths for Muster funding.

Gap analysis: what Muster does NOT cover

For departments considering grant applications, honesty about Muster's scope is essential. Muster covers:

Included in Muster (Muster-appropriate for grant applications):

- Personnel accountability during incidents
- PAR management
- Mayday declaration and propagation
- Evacuation orders
- ISO (Safety Officer) authority and workflows
- Hazard identification and tracking
- Rehab cycle management (NFPA 1580 Ch 22)
- Vitals capture during rehab
- Exposure event capture (OSHA 1910.1020)
- Long-term exposure records
- Multi-station and mutual aid coordination
- After-action reports and PDF generation
- Multi-device mesh operation
- Cloud-active incident visibility for responding units
- Command transfer with audit trail
- Whiteboard for tactical planning
- Training mode (segregated from real incidents)

NOT included in Muster (requires other tools or grant categories):

- CAD dispatch functionality (Muster consumes dispatch; doesn't originate it)
- Fire prevention education programs
- Fire inspection scheduling and tracking
- Fire investigation case management
- Firefighter recruitment and training LMS
- Payroll and personnel management
- Fleet maintenance tracking
- Facility management
- Public education programming
- Vehicle-mounted computers (Muster runs on tablets, not MDT hardware)
- Radio infrastructure

- Station alerting systems (bells, tones, PA)
- Traditional NFIRS reporting (Phase 7 NERIS connector planned; not shipped as of this document)

Implications for grant applications:

Departments applying for grants should:

1. Be honest about what Muster provides and doesn't provide.
2. Apply for Muster + tablets as the technology package, not for a bundled "all-in-one platform."
3. Consider companion grants for RMS software (Station Boss, Firehouse, etc.) if the department also needs records management.
4. Use AFG for the operational/response technology (Muster) and separate applications for other needs.

Misrepresenting Muster's scope in a grant application is grant fraud. Don't do it.

Cookie-cutter application templates

The following templates are designed for departments to customize. Insert department-specific details in `[BRACKETED_FIELDS]`.

Template A: AFG Financial Need Narrative

> The `[DEPARTMENT_NAME]` serves a community of approximately `[POPULATION]` residents across `[SQUARE_MILES]` square miles in `[COUNTY_NAME]` County, `[STATE]`. Our department is comprised of `[MEMBER_COUNT]` volunteer firefighters responding to approximately `[ANNUAL_CALLS]` calls per year.
>
> Our annual operating budget of $`[ANNUAL_BUDGET]` is constrained by `[TAX_CAP_MENTION / MUNICIPAL_BUDGET_LIMITS / BOND_PROPOSAL_DETAILS]`. In fiscal year `[MOST_RECENT_YEAR]`, we allocated $`[EQUIPMENT_BUDGET]` toward equipment and technology, of which $`[EMERGENCY_REPAIRS]` was consumed by unplanned repairs to `[SPECIFIC_APPARATUS_OR_EQUIPMENT]`.
>
> The community's economic circumstances further limit our ability to raise additional funds locally. Median household income in our first-due area is $`[MEDIAN_INCOME]`, and local unemployment stands at `[UNEMPLOYMENT_RATE]`%. `[DESCRIBE_ANY_LOCAL_ECONOMIC_HARDSHIP: recent business closures, tax base erosion, aging population, etc.]`
>
> We have pursued alternative funding through `[OTHER_GRANT_APPLICATIONS_ATTEMPTED, if applicable]` and local fundraising, generating $`[FUNDRAISING_TOTAL]` in `[YEAR]`. These efforts, while valuable, are insufficient to fund critical operational technology at the scale needed to protect our firefighters and community.
>
> Without AFG funding, `[DEPARTMENT_NAME]` cannot procure the response management technology described in this application. Our current accountability practices rely on `[PAPER TAGS / RADIO ROLL CALL / OTHER MANUAL METHOD]`, which represents a documented risk to firefighter safety during complex incidents.

Template B: AFG Project Description Narrative

> `[DEPARTMENT_NAME]` respectfully requests $`[TOTAL_REQUEST]` in AFG funding to procure Muster response management software, deployment tablets, and initial training. This technology will replace our current manual accountability processes with a modern, mesh-based digital system aligned with NFPA 1550 (2024) and NFPA 1580 (2025) consolidated standards.
>
> Muster is a mobile application that runs on tablets and phones used by the incident commander, safety officer, and firefighters during active fire incidents. It provides:
>
> - Real-time personnel accountability across multiple apparatus and multiple stations
> - Mayday declaration with automated propagation to all on-scene devices
> - Evacuation orders with audio/visual alerts across the device mesh
> - Safety Officer authority for hazard identification and emergency evacuation
> - Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) management with audit trails
> - Rehabilitation cycle documentation per NFPA 1580 Chapter 22
> - Occupational exposure capture per OSHA 1910.1020 with 30-year retention for cancer presumption documentation
> - Post-incident after-action reports in the format `[CHIEF_TITLE]` currently produces manually
>
> The technology operates entirely offline via a peer-to- peer wireless mesh (mDNS discovery + WebSocket transport), ensuring the system continues functioning at the incident scene even without cellular or wide-area internet connectivity.
>
> `[DEPARTMENT_NAME]` identifies the following operational risks that this technology will address: `[LIST_SPECIFIC_RISKS: recent near-miss incidents, firefighter injuries, mutual aid coordination gaps, exposure documentation deficiencies, aging accountability hardware, etc.]`
>
> This project is aligned with recognized standards including NFPA 1550 (2024 consolidation of 1500/1521/1561), NFPA 1580 (2025 consolidation of 1581-1584), and OSHA 1910.1020. The vendor, Safe Signals LLC, provides documentation of that alignment referenceable during procurement.

Template C: AFG Cost/Benefit Narrative

> `[DEPARTMENT_NAME]` estimates the following cost-benefit calculation for this project:
>
> **Total 5-year cost of ownership:** $`[TOTAL_5_YEAR]`
>
> - Year 1 software licensing (Tier `[X]`): $`[TIER_PRICE]`
> - Deployment tablets (`[N]` units at $`[TABLET_UNIT]`): $`[TABLET_TOTAL]`
> - Mounts, cases, charging: $`[ACCESSORIES_TOTAL]`
> - Initial training (2 days on-site): $`[TRAINING]`
> - Years 2-5 software licensing (fixed annual): $`[YEAR_2_5_LICENSING]`
>
> **Frequency of use:** `[ANNUAL_CALLS]` annual incidents × 5 years = `[FIVE_YEAR_CALLS]` incidents. Cost per incident: $`[COST_PER_INCIDENT]`.
>
> **Firefighter safety benefit:** The department has `[MEMBER_COUNT]` volunteer firefighters. Cost per firefighter protected over 5 years: $`[COST_PER_FIREFIGHTER]`.
>
> **Reduced insurance and liability exposure:** Modern accountability systems demonstrate due diligence during fireground operations. `[DESCRIBE_INSURANCE_RELATIONSHIP: potential premium reductions, safety credit programs, etc.]`
>
> **Documented incident value:** `[IF_APPLICABLE: a Mayday event in [YEAR] required [N] minutes to locate the affected firefighter using current manual methods. Modern mesh-based accountability would have reduced this to approximately [N] seconds. If this technology prevents one firefighter injury or fatality over the 5-year lifespan, the human cost avoided vastly exceeds the project cost.]`
>
> **Cost sharing and self-funding:** `[DEPARTMENT_NAME]` commits to `[5-15]`% cost share of $`[COST_SHARE_AMOUNT]` from `[FUNDING_SOURCE]`. Ongoing subscription costs beyond Year 1 will be funded through `[FUNDING_MECHANISM: line item in operating budget, fundraising commitment, district tax revenue, etc.]`.

Template D: AFG Statement of Effect Narrative

> Award of this AFG grant will fundamentally improve `[DEPARTMENT_NAME]`'s ability to protect firefighters and serve our community. Specific operational effects include:
>
> **Firefighter accountability during operations.** Every firefighter on scene will be tracked in real time by apparatus, assignment, and location. Time to complete a PAR will decrease from `[CURRENT_PAR_TIME]` to under `[TARGET_PAR_TIME]`. During any Mayday event, the incident commander will immediately see which firefighter is in distress, their last assignment, and their last known position, enabling faster rapid intervention.
>
> **Multi-station and mutual aid coordination.** Our department frequently coordinates with `[MUTUAL_AID_PARTNERS]` on working fires and complex incidents. Muster's federated mesh capability allows personnel from multiple departments to appear in the same accountability system regardless of which apparatus they arrived on. This directly addresses the "interoperability" AFG objective.
>
> **Exposure documentation.** OSHA 1910.1020 requires 30-year retention of firefighter occupational exposure records. Our current paper-based tracking cannot reliably meet this retention requirement. Muster's exposure capture module documents structure fire exposures, hazardous material contacts, and other occupational exposures in a digital record with legally required retention.
>
> **Cancer presumption support.** `[STATE]` has cancer presumption law providing `[PRESUMPTION_DESCRIPTION]`. Comprehensive exposure documentation is essential for firefighters filing presumption claims. This system provides the documentation infrastructure our firefighters and their families deserve.
>
> **Standards alignment.** NFPA 1550 (2024) consolidates previous fireground safety standards. NFPA 1580 (2025) consolidates occupational medical program standards. Alignment with these consolidated standards demonstrates `[DEPARTMENT_NAME]`'s commitment to modern safety practices and supports `[CHIEF_TITLE]`'s ability to demonstrate due diligence to municipal leadership.

Template E: AFG Critical Infrastructure Narrative

> `[DEPARTMENT_NAME]`'s first-due response area includes the following critical infrastructure:
>
> - `[LIST_HOSPITALS_AND_HEALTHCARE_FACILITIES]`
> - `[LIST_SCHOOLS_AND_CHILDCARE_FACILITIES]`
> - `[LIST_NURSING_HOMES_AND_ASSISTED_LIVING]`
> - `[LIST_POWER_PLANTS_AND_UTILITY_FACILITIES]`
> - `[LIST_INDUSTRIAL_HAZMAT_FACILITIES]`
> - `[LIST_TRANSPORTATION_INFRASTRUCTURE: major highways, rail lines, airports]`
> - `[LIST_HISTORIC_STRUCTURES_AND_HIGH_LIFE_HAZARD_TARGETS]`
>
> Complex incidents at any of these facilities will require multiple companies, multi-station response, mutual aid coordination, and structured accountability systems. The technology proposed in this application directly supports `[DEPARTMENT_NAME]`'s ability to manage such incidents safely and effectively.

Template F: AFG Vulnerable Populations Narrative

> `[DEPARTMENT_NAME]`'s response area includes populations with specific vulnerabilities requiring extended fireground operations, technical rescue capability, or specialized evacuation support:
>
> - Elderly population: `[PERCENTAGE]`% of residents are 65+
> - School-aged population: `[SCHOOL_ENROLLMENT]` students across `[SCHOOL_COUNT]` schools
> - Non-English-speaking households: `[PERCENTAGE]`%
> - Low-income households: `[MEDIAN_INCOME]` median household income vs. state median of $`[STATE_MEDIAN]`
> - `[OTHER_SPECIFIC_VULNERABILITIES: high-density multi-family housing, transient populations, seasonal population surges, etc.]`
>
> Modern fireground accountability protects the firefighters responding to protect these populations, improving outcomes for both firefighters and the vulnerable populations we serve.

Steps for a department to apply for AFG

Cookie-cutter checklist a department can follow:

6-12 months before deadline

- ☐ Confirm SAM.gov registration is current (renew if within 90 days of expiration)
- ☐ Confirm FEMA GO account is active and passwords are known
- ☐ Confirm department's DUNS/UEI number is current
- ☐ Attend an AFG informational webinar (FEMA hosts several each spring)
- ☐ Identify a grant writer (department volunteer, contract consultant, or municipal grant office)
- ☐ Request formal quote from Safe Signals
- ☐ Identify cost share source and confirm availability
- ☐ Begin drafting narrative sections using templates above

3-6 months before deadline

- ☐ Complete department needs assessment (critical infrastructure, vulnerable populations, current capability gaps)
- ☐ Gather local statistics: population, calls per year, response times, mutual aid frequency, near-miss incidents
- ☐ Compile documentation of local funding challenges
- ☐ Draft all six narrative sections
- ☐ Have narrative sections peer-reviewed by another chief (ideally one whose department has previously won AFG)
- ☐ Confirm project scope and budget with Safe Signals

1-3 months before deadline

- ☐ Finalize all narrative sections
- ☐ Complete FEMA GO application forms
- ☐ Attach quote, product specifications, and any supporting documentation
- ☐ Verify all required forms are attached
- ☐ Have municipal leadership sign off (if required)
- ☐ Submit at least 5-7 days before deadline (technical issues on the day of deadline can disqualify)

After submission

- [ ] Confirm submission via FEMA GO confirmation number
- [ ] Save submission receipt with department records
- [ ] Prepare for follow-up questions from FEMA reviewers
- [ ] Wait for award decision (typically 6-12 months after submission)

What Safe Signals should do to support grant applications

Actions Safe Signals should take to become a "grant-friendly vendor":

Documentation

- [ ] Standard quote template with department-specific customization fields
- [ ] Product specification PDF (2-3 pages, technical but accessible)
- [ ] NFPA 1550 alignment documentation
- [ ] NFPA 1580 alignment documentation
- [ ] OSHA 1910.1020 retention documentation
- [ ] Case study template (to be filled in with real customers over 2027)
- [ ] Cost-benefit calculation spreadsheet
- [ ] Sample narrative language (this document)

Process

- [ ] Grant support inbox: grants@safesignals.io
- [ ] Response SLA for grant support requests (48 hours)
- [ ] Grant coordination workflow: request → quote → documentation package → follow-through
- [ ] Follow-up on grant applications (offer to review draft narrative sections before submission)
- [ ] Track which departments applied to which grants
- [ ] Celebrate awarded departments (with permission)

Marketing

- [ ] Grant support section on marketing site
- [ ] "Grants" page listing eligible programs
- [ ] Blog posts about grant awards (once departments permit)
- [ ] Case studies emphasizing grant-funded deployments

Realistic expectations for grant funding

Honest assessment of what grants will and won't do:

Grants will:

- Cover initial Muster licensing costs for many volunteer departments
- Cover tablets and deployment hardware
- Cover initial training
- Reduce the perceived risk of adoption ("we don't have to fund this from our budget")
- Support 5-year budgeting because AFG can fund Year 1 and give the department time to build subscription costs into future budgets

Grants will NOT:

- Fund every department (AFG has ~15% approval rate historically)
- Fund every applicant year after year (typical departments win AFG once every 3-7 years)
- Cover recurring subscription costs beyond Year 1 (though Year 1 cost can be higher to include multi-year licensing prepayment)
- Replace a coherent operating budget
- Bypass the department's normal procurement process

Departments should plan for:

- Multi-year budgeting that includes recurring Muster subscription costs
- Fallback funding paths if AFG is unsuccessful
- Multiple concurrent grant applications (AFG + state programs + local foundations)

Cadence of grant opportunities

Rough annual calendar for grant applications relevant to Muster:

Month	Program	Action
December	NY V-FIRE opens	Draft application (NY only)
January-February	NY V-FIRE deadline	Submit if applicable
March-April	NY V-FIRE closes	Wait for awards
Spring	AFG NOFO published	Read carefully
May-June	AFG window open	Submit application
June-July	AFG window closes	Wait for awards
Fall	AFG awards announced	Deploy if awarded
September	R&R Grant opens (NY)	Draft if applicable

Departments should plan their grant application cadence across the year rather than trying to apply to everything at once.

For NY departments specifically

Given the density of volunteer departments in Nassau and Suffolk counties, NY-specific guidance:

Primary path: AFG federal grant

Secondary path: V-FIRE state grant (equipment track, narrow fit but no cost share)

Tertiary path: Recruitment & Retention grant (indirect support)

Consider concurrent: Suffolk County SERVE Program incentives, individual district capital budgets, local municipal contributions.

FASNY resources: Firefighters Association of the State of New York provides grant writing guidance and has periodic professional development programs. Contact https://www.fasny.com for member resources.

LI-specific opportunities:

- Nassau County Fire Marshal's Office: coordinates with volunteer departments on shared services
- Suffolk County Fire Rescue and Emergency Services: county-level coordination opportunities
- Local foundations: many LI communities have community foundations that fund emergency services

Not covered by this document

The following topics are outside the scope of this document but worth being aware of:

Federal preparedness grants other than AFG/FP&S/SAFER — require more complex applications with multi-agency coordination. Fire departments typically access these through county or state emergency management offices.

Rural development funding — USDA and other rural development funders occasionally support rural fire services. Not primary paths for suburban LI departments but worth knowing for departments in rural areas.

Foundation grants — private foundations (Firefighters Charitable Foundation, various state foundations) provide smaller awards for specific purposes. Application process varies widely.

Bond financing — larger departments occasionally finance technology through municipal bonds. This is a different funding path than grants and requires partnership with municipal government.

Vendor financing — some technology vendors offer financing terms. Safe Signals does not currently offer financing but may consider it for larger deployments.

Version history

Version	Date	Changes	Author
0.1	2026-07-26	Initial draft. AFG, V-FIRE, FP&S programs documented. Six narrative templates for AFG application. Cookie-cutter checklist. Safe Signals support commitments.	Safe Signals LLC
1.0	2026-07-27	Status header updated: federal-focused; state-specific supplements in development. Marketing surface `/grants` walked back to a holding page pending state supplements (federal-focused PDF still downloadable via `/grants` with a "v1.0 federal-focused" chip). Multi-state grant data pipeline scaffolding shipped (PA / TX / OH state YAMLs, all `published: false`). No content change to this doc — federal kit remains authoritative.	Safe Signals LLC
1.1	2026-07-28	Version-history entry only; reconciles to docs sweep of 2026-07-28.	Safe Signals LLC