



Department: Fire
Cost Center: 8506
For Agenda of: 2/4/2025
Placement: Consent
Estimated Time: N/A

FROM: Todd Tuggle, Fire Chief
Prepared By: Nicole Vert, Business Analyst

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZE THE FIRE DEPARTMENT TO APPLY FOR FEMA ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTER GRANT

RECOMMENDATION

1. Authorize the Fire Department's previous application for funding under the Federal Emergency Management Act (FEMA) Assistance to Firefighter Grant (AFG) Program in the amount of \$2,200,000 to purchase a replacement tiller-ladder fire truck; and
2. Authorize the City Manager, or their designee, to execute the grant documents and approve the budget changes necessary to appropriate the grant amount upon notification that the grant has been awarded.

POLICY CONTEXT

The recommended actions are consistent with the City of San Luis Obispo's Financial Management Manual, Section 740 - Grant Management Policy. The policy states that Council will approve all grant applications in excess of \$5,000 and delegate receipt and contract execution to the City Manager.

On May 17, 2022, Council approved a Purchasing Policy Update to the Financial Management Manual that required Council Approval for purchases that cost over \$200,000.

DISCUSSION

State, federal, and non-profit grants are occasionally offered to assist local governments with the financial impacts associated with daily operations and/or mandated programs. The Fire Department actively seeks out these opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of the Department while increasing fiscal sustainability for the City. A recent grant opportunity was identified, which is in line with these goals and addresses a current need for the City: the FEMA Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 AFG program¹. The FY 2024 grant applications opened in November 2024 and closed December 20, 2024. Due to the very short time frame within which a grant application needed to be prepared and submitted,

¹ FEMA AFG Grant Website: <https://www.fema.gov/grants/preparedness/firefighters/assistance-grants>

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Council authority for the application was not able to be obtained prior to the application deadline. However, to preserve the City's ability to apply and potentially receive funds through this program, the Fire Department submitted an application and is now seeking confirmation from Council that the application should be pursued. If not approved, the application will be withdrawn.

The Federal AFG Program is one of three grant programs that constitute the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and FEMA's focus on enhancing the safety of the public and firefighters with respect to fire and fire-related hazards. The AFG Program accomplishes this goal by providing direct financial assistance to eligible fire departments for critical training and equipment. The AFG Program represents one part of a comprehensive set of measures authorized by Congress and implemented by DHS.

The objectives of the AFG program are to provide critically needed resources that equip and train emergency personnel to recognized standards, enhance operational efficiencies, foster interoperability, and support community resilience. Since Fiscal Year 2018, the AFG program has awarded funding to purchase more than 800 fire apparatuses.

Truck 1 was purchased in 2010 and is the City's only tiller-ladder truck. This truck has the tightest turning radius in the Fire Department's fleet, giving it the ability to maneuver the City's narrow, congested streets where other, shorter, straight frame apparatus are not able. The 100-foot ladder has the ability to reach the tallest buildings around the City and on the nearby University campus that ground ladders cannot. Additionally, being a larger apparatus, a tiller truck has greater storage capacity for carrying gear, equipment, and ladders. This critical feature allows the Fire Department to bring more equipment than could otherwise be carried on a smaller apparatus.

At the time of purchase, Truck 1 was responding to far fewer calls and was intended to operate for 20 years. In 2023 the truck responded to 2,080 calls, a 40% increase from 2010. The unforeseen increase in use has caused the truck to age more rapidly than anticipated, especially in the drive train. The truck is spending increasing hours out of service undergoing needed repairs. The department has been approved funding for the truck to undergo a drivetrain refurbishment by the end of FY2025. This is intended to reduce the repair costs and downtime while ensuring it is operational through the scheduled 2029 replacement date.

Firetrucks are custom built and historically had a lead time of 18-24 months from the date of order to delivery. In recent years the delivery date has extended to 48 months. If the department is awarded this grant, the order for the new truck will be placed immediately, but delivery will remain on the current replacement schedule with delivery in 2029.

The proposed AFG program application seeks up to \$1 million in funding for a replacement heavy-duty, tractor-drawn, 107-foot Aerial Apparatus.

Previous Council or Advisory Body Action

On [October 20, 2009](#), the City Council approved the sole source acquisition of a Pierce Tillered Aerial Quint and authorized the Mayor to enter into a purchase agreement with Pierce Manufacturing in the amount of \$1,014,181.46.

On [August 15, 2023](#), the City Council authorized the fire department to apply for an AFG Program to send two firefighters to paramedic school and authorized the City Manager, or designee, to execute the grant documents and approve the budget changes necessary upon notification that the grant had been awarded.

Public Engagement

This item is on the agenda for the February 4, 2025 City Council meeting and will follow all required postings and notifications. The public will have an opportunity to comment on this item at or before the meeting.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The California Environmental Quality Act does not apply to the recommended action in this report, because the action does not constitute a “Project” under CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15378. If the work associated with the grant funding requires environmental review, staff will not proceed with the project until a review has been completed.

FISCAL IMPACT

Budgeted: No

Budget Year: 2025-26

Funding Identified: Yes

Fiscal Analysis:

Funding Sources	Total Budget Available	Current Funding Request	Remaining Balance	Annual Ongoing Cost
General Fund	\$	\$	\$	\$
State				
Federal		\$1,000,000		
Fees				
Other: Fleet Replacement Fund		\$1,200,000		
Total		\$2,200,000	\$	\$

The purchase price of the new truck is \$2,200,000. The FEMA grant awards are determined by population size. For the City of San Luis Obispo, the maximum grant award is capped at \$1,000,000. The match required from the City is \$1,200,000 for the balance of the truck costs. The budget for the truck replacement is on the Capital Improvement Project Fleet Replacement Schedule for FY2029. The fire apparatus vendor’s lead time from date of order to delivery is currently four years. The vendor has assured staff that to

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place an order, funds are not necessary and will be due upon delivery, allowing the funding to remain in FY2029. Staff spoke with FEMA regarding the long lead time and were advised extension requests were common for vehicle acquisitions while awaiting delivery and are generally granted on this basis.

All other costs associated with the maintenance and operations of the truck are currently in the Fire Department's budget.

ALTERNATIVES

Council could direct staff to withdraw the AFG program application. This is not recommended as fire service grant opportunities are limited and the grant funds would only serve to enhance the City's safety and resilience while increasing fiscal sustainability for the City.

ATTACHMENTS

A - FEMA AFG Ladder Truck Replacement Grant Application