



# FEMA

## Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program

# Writing a Good Narrative

### Summary

Typically when we read, we are looking for an introduction or theme, an explanation and an ending or summary.

Professional writers often say that when you are trying to persuade someone to do something, there should be a beginning, middle and an end. Often referred to as persuasive writing, this format is perceived as critical to ensuring your request is well-received and easily understandable.

Do not use national statistics. Use local statistics, and use only enough to validate the problem statement in your narrative, or as proof of best practices used by an organization that has been successful with a similar project.

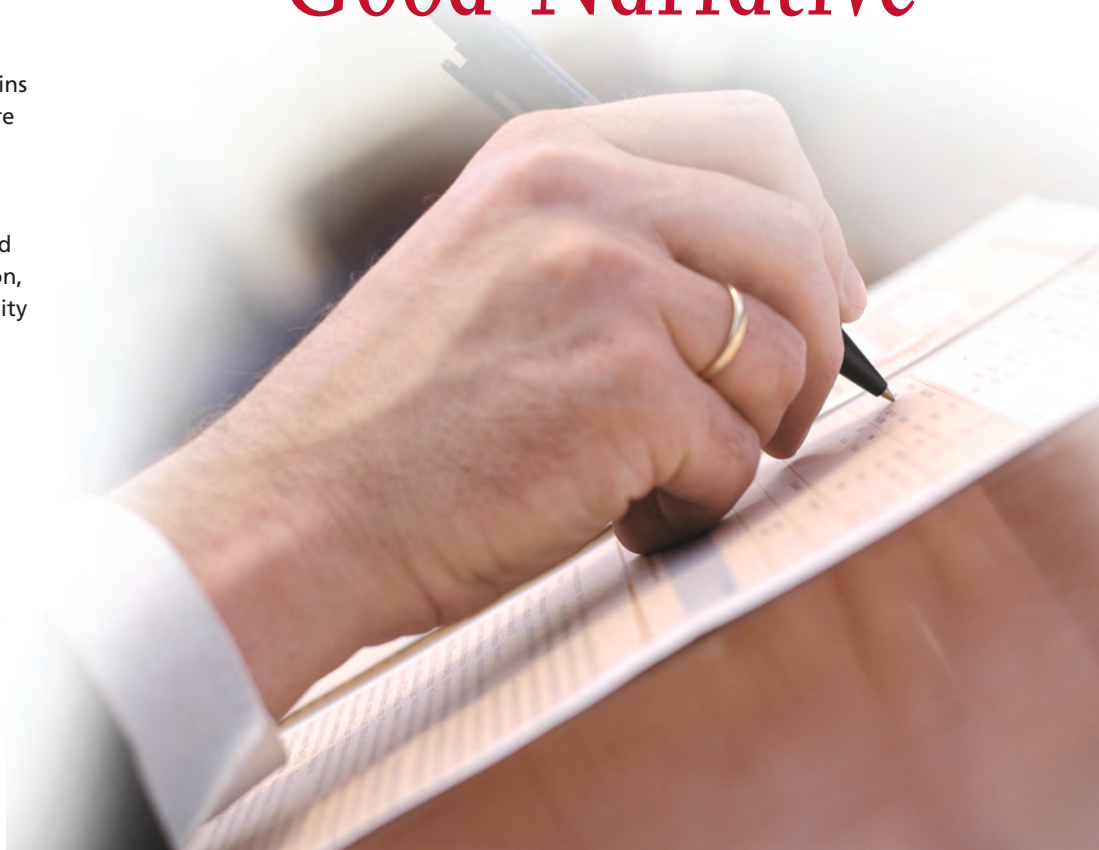
Check your work and have someone who is not associated with the project read the entire application thoroughly and provide a critique of your work. Be open to their thoughts. After all, you trusted them enough to review the result of your hard work.

Summarize your case. Restate the problem or risk, the facts, the solution and a statement of cause and effect or prediction.

Remember that there is help available. The AFG Program Office maintains a help desk during normal business hours (1-866-274-0960), and there are representatives at each of the FEMA regional offices who can assist you. You may also receive help from the website [www.firegrantsupport.com](http://www.firegrantsupport.com). At the AFG Website, program guidance, frequently asked questions and grant-specific applicant tutorials are available. The tutorials are narrated training that will help you with the specifics of completing an application, highlight grant priorities, and include helpful hints to enhance your ability to develop a good application.



# FEMA



## Narrative Development

In order to apply for a grant under the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFG), the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Grants (SAFER) or the Fire Prevention and Safety Grants (FP&S), you must complete an electronic application. Applications are accessible during application periods and can be found on the AFG Website ([www.firegrantsupport.com](http://www.firegrantsupport.com)).

Your application is first scored electronically. The items you have requested and the indicators of current risk that you have identified are matched against the published funding priorities (these are listed in the applicable version of the *Program Guidance* for each grant opportunity). The highest electronically scored applications are sent to the peer review panels. (Note: For the Fire Prevention and Firefighters Safety Grant opportunity, all applications are sent to peer review panels.)

At peer review panels, an application receives at least three independent reviews and scores. These three scores are averaged to create your final score. The highest scoring applications from the peer review panels are sent to the AFG Program Office for final award consideration and processing.

All three grant opportunities (Fire Grants, SAFER, and FP&S) require that you answer specific questions about your department, your community, the nature of your problem/risk, and your solution. In addition, the applications for all three grants require that you further explain your grant request in narrative form. Many applicants find the narrative portion of the application to be the most challenging aspect of the grant application process.

When drafting a grant request narrative, many find that the most difficult aspect of writing a narrative is the development of an outline. However, the AFG Program Office has already done that for you. They provide details regarding the specific information you should discuss in your narrative, and they tell you in what order these items should appear. So essentially, you are asked to fill in the blanks. Fire Grants, for example, require you to discuss four items. The first item you should discuss is a project description and budget. This item has four parts listed as follows:

- ★ *Who are you?*
- ★ *What is your identified risk/problem?*
- ★ *What is your solution/remedy?*
- ★ *How much will it cost?*

For the AFG (Fire Grants), you are asked to describe cost/benefit of the project, your financial need, and what effect receiving the grant will have on your daily operations. Remember that panelists are assigned to a classroom atmosphere for five days and have to read for eight hours a day.

Do not use the maximum narrative size unless it is necessary. Know and use the format parameters. In each case, the objective is to be direct, concise and persuasive.

## Definitions

**Cost/Benefit:** What are you receiving in return for the investment of funds, or how will you make sure the money was spent wisely?

**Financial Need:** Why do you need money from the Federal government? You may want to enter a very brief description of your fire department's income and expenses in recent years in order to illustrate your current economic situation. Also, providing a description of how you have attempted to fund your needs previously will demonstrate a continuing need and financial shortfall.

**Effect on Daily Operations:** How will the funds from this grant improve your ability to perform tactical operations, improve firefighter safety, or mitigate civilian casualties? Quantifying the effect on daily operations will enhance your case for funding the application. For example, "The training received under this grant would be put into practice during every one of the 3,300 alarms our department responds to." In most cases, the specific requested information can be presented in one to three paragraphs. Remember, your peers are reviewing your narrative; so write the narrative as you would like to read it. You are attempting to persuade someone to allocate a significant amount of money to your organization.

Picture yourself sitting at your desk, and a person walks into your office and requests \$100,000 dollars to support or enhance their organization's operation. What questions would you have for them?

*Those questions might look something like the following:*

- ★ *Why do you need this money?*
- ★ *What are you getting for this money?*
- ★ *What difference will it make?*