



Agenda Report

Fullerton City Council

MEETING DATE: OCTOBER 21, 2025

TO: CITY COUNCIL / SUCCESSOR AGENCY

SUBMITTED BY: ADAM LOESER, FIRE CHIEF

PREPARED BY: ANDREW YANG, ADMINISTRATIVE ANALYST II

SUBJECT: FISCAL YEAR 2024 SAFER GRANT AWARD
ACCEPTANCE

SUMMARY

The Fire Department received \$2,836,716 through the Federal Emergency Management Agency Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grant Program. Staff requests City Council accept the award which funds twelve Firefighter positions for a three-year period and redeploy Fire Engine 6 as an Advanced Life Support unit.

PROPOSED MOTION

1. Accept and appropriate receipt and use of \$2,836,716 in Fiscal Year 2024 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant funds from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security – Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) within the Grants Fund (Fund 32).
2. Authorize City Manager, or designee, to execute documents related to the grant agreement and program implementation as the City of Fullerton Authorized Organization Representative, in a form approved by the City Attorney.
3. Authorize revision to the Fire Department Personnel Summary to add twelve sworn positions (six Firefighters, three Fire Engineers and three Fire Captains) and authorize City Manager to initiate the recruitment and hiring process for the twelve Firefighter positions funded by the SAFER Grant.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- Approve the Proposed Motion
- Do not approve the Proposed Motion
- Other options brought by City Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Proposed Motion.

CITY MANAGER REMARKS

None.

PRIORITY POLICY STATEMENT

This item matches the following Priority Policy Statements:

- Fiscal and Organizational Stability
- Public Safety.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Fire Department secured a \$2,836,716 Fiscal Year 2024 SAFER Grant award from FEMA. The grant fixes the FEMA cost share at 75% of eligible expenses in Years 1 and 2 and 35% in Year 3, with the City responsible for the remaining portion. The following table outlines the federal award and the City local share structure:

GRANT YEAR	APPLICABLE FISCAL YEARS	FEDERAL SHARE (FEMA)		CITY SHARE (LOCAL MATCH)	
		%	Amount	%	Amount
YEAR 1	FY 2025-26	75%	\$335,423	25%	\$111,807
	FY 2026-27		\$814,598		\$271,533
YEAR 2	FY 2026-27	75%	\$335,423	25%	\$111,808
	FY 2027-28		\$814,598		\$271,533
YEAR 3	FY 2027-28	35%	\$156,531	65%	\$290,700
	FY 2028-29*		\$380,146		\$705,985
TOTAL			\$2,836,716		\$1,763,364

**Through end of Grant Year 3 (March 15, 2029)*

FEMA officially recognizes a \$4,600,080 project budget, however, the City financial obligation will be higher due to additional associated expenses eligible for grant reimbursement including certain contractually required compensation (scheduled FLSA overtime pay, uniform stipends and other incentive pays) and ancillary expenses for hiring-related activity (background investigations, medical and psychological exams), firefighter equipment, IT support, Emergency Medical Technician licensing and training requirements. Staff estimates approximately \$30,000 per firefighter per year in additional associated expenses.

The City will also incur costs to properly staff the additional fire engine by promoting six Fire Suppression personnel to the Fire Engineer and Fire Captain ranks. These promotional expenses fall outside the FEMA definition of a first-year Firefighter “usual annual cost” and require local funding. These promotions will add salary costs for the remainder of the current fiscal year, based on average classification pay differentials.

The grant performance period does not align with the City fiscal year cycle, so the City will recognize the federal funds across four budget years, offsetting the costs shown in the previous table. FEMA provides funds on a reimbursement basis, requiring the City to initially cover costs and then draw down federal funds after submitting eligible expenditures.

The Fire Department has proactively taken measures to ensure the project remains fiscally sustainable both during and beyond the grant period. The City projects the transition to a City-operated ambulance program in February 2026 will save approximately \$1.7 million over three years, while improved EMS reimbursement rates and new community partnerships should generate additional revenue. Staff projects these combined initiatives will yield savings and generate additional revenue to help offset the net three-year obligation to redeploy Engine 6.

The estimated annual cost for salaries, benefits and support for the enhanced deployment model after the grant period concludes in Fiscal Year 2028-29 would total approximately \$1.9 million, with the actual amount subject to future labor negotiations.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

The Fire Department applied for the highly competitive SAFER Grant Program, ratified by City Council on July 15, 2025. FEMA selected Fullerton as one of only 300 fire departments nationwide to receive funding from the \$324 million federal allocation for Fiscal Year 2024. Letters of support from a broad coalition of federal, state and local officials and stakeholders, including U.S. Senators Adam Schiff and Alex Padilla, U.S. Representatives J. Luis Correa and Derek Tran, State Senator Dr. Steven S. Choi and Assemblywoman Sharon Quirk-Silva, Orange County Supervisor Doug Chaffee, the Fullerton City Council and the Fullerton Firefighters’ Association, IAFF Local 3421 strengthened the application. The Fire Department received the maximum award allowable under the federal cost-share formula, thanks in part to this support.

This grant award directly addresses the gap between available resources and the growing service demand for emergency response in the City. The department experienced a 70% increase in incident volume over the last decade (19% increase in the last five years) while simultaneously operating with fewer resources since eliminating Fire Engine 6 in 2018. The reduced deployment resulted in a critically low staffing ratio of just 0.52 firefighters per 1,000 permanent residents – well below regional and national benchmarks for comparable urban fire departments. The ratio drops even further to 0.34 firefighters per 1,000 people, when accounting for the daytime population surge driven by educational institutions and major employment centers in the City.

The Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps updated in April 2025 expanded the designated “Very High” wildfire risk areas in Fullerton by 28 percent, significantly increasing the share of the community classified at elevated wildfire risk. The Insurance Services Office (ISO)

issued low scores for the Fire Department deployment model (6.1 out of 10 points) and Company Personnel (6.9 out of 15 points) in the following month, resulting in a downgrade of Fullerton's ISO rating from Class 2 to Class 3. From an operational perspective, this means a single structure fire or multi-vehicle accident can exhaust all available departmental resources, triggering a city-wide coverage cascade effect and an imbalanced reliance on neighboring agencies.

The twelve new Firefighter positions funded by this grant would allow the department to execute its strategic plan to reactivate Engine 6 at Station 6 and return the aerial ladder truck to the downtown core at Station 1. This realignment corrects a critical resource mismatch, restores rapid ALS response to northwest Fullerton and places specialized rescue capabilities where most needed with significant expected outcomes. Stabilized shift coverage would reduce firefighter fatigue and injuries, consistent four-person staffing would improve ability to meet national response standards and enhanced deployment should restore the ISO Class 2 rating. This rating improvement could translate directly to lower fire insurance premiums for Fullerton households and businesses.

If City Council approves this item, staff will formally accept the award in the FEMA GO system by the October 25, 2025 deadline and begin the 180-day period for recruitment and hiring. The seven-week Firefighter Academy for the twelve new positions would begin in early March 2026, immediately following the FEMA recruitment allowance. The Fire Department will coordinate with Human Resources to complete the hiring process, with Administrative Services to manage the grant financial reporting requirements and with Public Works to address fire apparatus needs resulting from the expanded staffing.

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Grant Award Letter
- Attachment 2 – Fire Department Proposed Personnel Summary

cc: Interim City Manager Eddie Manfro