



LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT

RONNIE R. VILLANUEVA
INTERIM FIRE CHIEF

April 11, 2025

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 25-030

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM: *RV* Ronnie R. Villanueva, Interim Fire Chief

SUBJECT: IMPACT OF FEDERAL LEVEL CUTBACKS ON THE LAFD AND THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

FINAL ACTION:	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved w/Corrections	<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn
	<input type="checkbox"/> Denied	<input type="checkbox"/> Received & Filed	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

SUMMARY

The Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) relies heavily on federal and state grants that fill the gaps of non-budgeted training, equipment and positions. Our Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) program is 100% dependent on grant funding as they do not have a budget line item. In addition, some of our other sections depend mostly on grant funding to purchase equipment for operational readiness (CERT, TEMS, Hazmat, PortOps, etc.). Our Homeland Security grants fund equipment and training for our Type 1 USAR and Hazmat teams. Grants fund special projects for Arson, Air Ops, Information Technology, and other programs when they fit within the parameters of the grant. We also receive funding through competitive grants like AFG, SAFER, and PSGP for special projects.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:
Receive and file.

DISCUSSION

Grants provide a one-time funding source for staffing, equipment, apparatus, training, or other applicable items. Organizations are expected to absorb the costs for recurring equipment, staffing, and maintenance following the grant procurement periods. With that said, numerous grants are annually recurrent as we see with the annual FEMA US&R grant, giving us the ability to have numerous grants of the same type open at the same time if they have a multi-year period of performance.

Most Federal Grants have a 3-year cycle period to complete all requirements of approved Grant Funding. The City approval/transmittal process is extensive and cumbersome, taking approximately one year of the performance period to get full approval and front-funding in place to begin drawing down or spending.

Funding cannot be requested for a project that is already budgeted for. This is considered supplanting. One project cannot have multiple grant sources used for funding. Currently, the LAFD manages approximately \$49 million in Federal Grant Awards. These include such grants as;

- Annual FEMA US&R Grant
- 911 Switch Project
- Sonar and Dive Simulator
- Lucas Compression Devices
- SAFER Grants
- Fire Boat Pilot Training (Using Navigation Simulator)
- Upcoming Fire Station Improvements (HUD Grant)
- AHIMT Training Classes
- UASI Training Funding
- UASI Funded Positions (i.e. JHAT, CIKR/JRIC)

In an effort to increase training and capabilities through equipment and positions, the LAFD is always looking for additional grant funding. There is usually no shortage of grant funding available, although the LAFD is normally unable to take on new grants due to staffing shortages within the Grants Section causing an inability to manage the grant. Managing a grant takes hundreds of administrative hours to ensure proper documentation and accountability to meet the grant requirements.

There are roughly an additional \$15 million in grants that the LAFD is looking at applying for to take advantage of such as;

- Equipment, Training, and Salaries
- Wildland/Brush Mitigation/Management Equipment (Heavy Equipment)
- Fire Station Improvements (Additional HUD Grants)
- Infrastructure Development Grants (New Fire Stations and Headquarters)

The grant world has countless programs available for emergency preparation, response, and disaster recovery. The LAFD would like to take advantage of these however we are beholden to the amount of staff to manage these potential grant awards and the short period of performance coupled with the City's purchasing process. Below is a brief rundown of the grant history within the LAFD.

Annual FEMA Team US&R Grant

This grant is used to run the FEMA US&R Program California Task Force 1 (CA-TF1). Annually the LAFD/CA-TF1 receives this grant and has done so for the last 32 years.

- Currently 4 open FEMA US&R grants
 - EMW-2021-CA-00060 = \$1,420,228 (Award + Supplemental)
 - EMW-2022-CA-00050 = \$1,370,127 (Award + Supplemental)
 - EMW-2023-CA-05382 = \$1,408,828 (Award + Supplemental)
 - EMW-2024-CA-05164 = \$1,370,127 (Award)
 - 2024 Not available yet due to City process

- FEMA Grant funded vehicle purchases
 - 2 semi-truck and trailers
 - 2 box trucks
 - 2 FEMA utility trucks
 - 1 Sprinter van

AFG (Assistance to Firefighters Grants)

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) awarded grants through the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) directly to fire departments, nonaffiliated EMS organizations, and state fire training academies (SFTA) for enhancing the health and safety of first responders and improving their abilities to protect the public from fire and fire-related hazards. FY2023 \$360 Million national funding available.

- **2024** - Withdrew application of \$1.47M for Thermal Imaging Cameras
- **2023** - Not pursued due to staffing challenging and budgetary issues
- **2022** - Awarded \$1.851M for Lucas Chest Compression Devices
- **2020** - Awarded \$998K Award for COVID PPE Supplies (Supplemental)
- **2020** - Awarded 3.558M Award for SCBA Equipment
- **2019** - Not Awarded \$1.492M for extractors (21 Fire Stations)
- **2018** - Not Awarded \$800K for Wildland Fire Shelters
- **2017** - Not Awarded \$1.668M for Firefighter Bailout Units

SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) Grants (UNDER AFG)

This grant program provides funding to firefighters to obtain critically needed equipment, protective gear, emergency vehicles, training and other resources. FY2023 \$58.287 Million national funding available.

- **2024** - Not Awarded \$38.76M for 60 new members (Support costs were estimated to cost an additional \$38M over the three years for salaries and overtime, not including station improvements and apparatus purchasing)
- **2023** - Awarded \$7.7M for 12 new members (Engine 207; support costs anticipated to be approximately \$7.5M over the three years for salaries and overtime, not including station improvements and apparatus purchasing)
- **2017** - Awarded \$7.49M for 21 new members (Cost Share was 25% for years 1 & 2, and 65% for year 3, in addition to other support costs encumbered, position differential and overtime)
- **2016** - Awarded \$25.08M for 48 new members (Cost Share was 25% for years 1 & 2, and 35% for year 3, in addition to other support costs encumbered, position differential and overtime)

HMGP (Hazard Mitigation Grant Program)

Hazard mitigation includes long-term efforts to reduce risk and the potential impact of future disasters. HMGP assists communities rebuild in a better, stronger, and safer way in order to become more resilient overall. This grant program can fund a wide variety of migration projects, including: planning and enforcement, flood protection, retrofitting, and construction.

California's management falls under Cal OES which is grouped under:

1. PrepareCA Match - Provided up to \$48 Million in state funding to cover the non-federal (local) cost share for up to \$144 Million of federal funding for FEMA HMGP activities and projects benefiting eligible socially vulnerable and high hazard risk communities.
2. PrepareCA JumpStart - Provided \$15 Million in total state funding dedicated to help jumpstart eligible socially vulnerable and high hazard risk communities in their development and implementation of resilience planning and activities. Cal OES is not currently accepting applications for PrepareCA JumpStart.

PSGP (Port Security Grant Program)

Funding to state, local, and private-sector partners to help protect critical port infrastructure from terrorism, enhance marine domain awareness, improve port-wide maritime security risk management, and maintain or reestablish maritime security mitigation protocols that support port recovery and resiliency capabilities. FY2023 \$100 Million national funding available.

RHMR (Regional Hazardous Materials Response) Reimbursement Program

This is a state cooperative agreement and non-competitive. Implemented in 2018, in response to identified "gap" areas by assigning 12 newly purchased Cal OES Type II Hazardous Materials response vehicles to be strategically located in rural and metropolitan fire departments. Funds provided to train 25 personnel from each agency in hazardous materials and terrorism response and create a sustainment plan to maintain staffing for response to these types of incidents.

UASI (Urban Areas Security Initiative) Grant

This program provides funding to enhance regional preparedness and capabilities in designated high-threat, high-density areas. This preparedness comes in the form of training, equipment and positions. As described previously, our US&R program is run almost 100% off of the UASI and FEMA US&R grants. All equipment and training are funded through these.

Some of the US&R training that this grant funded last year alone includes:

- Rope Rescue Awareness Operations (RRAO)
- Rope Rescue Technician (RRT)
- Confined Space Rescue Technician (CSRT)
- Structural Collapse Specialist I & II (SCS I/II)
- Trench Rescue Technician (TRT)
- River/Flood Rescue Technician (RVRT)
- Common Passenger Vehicle Rescue Technician (CPVRT) x 2
- Machinery Rescue Technician (MRT) x 2
- Annual Swift Water Rescue recurrent training

Much like the FEMA grant award, UASI funding is an annual allotment. Below is a rundown of the UASI funding since 2020 that has been spent on training, salaries, equipment and vehicles.

- UASI 20 - \$7.1 million
- UASI 21 - \$7.2 million
- UASI 22 - \$5.2 million
- UASI 23 - \$5.1 million
- UASI 24 - \$5.1 million
- UASI 25 - Anticipated \$5.3 million – Application submitted - Committees met to discuss 8 areas of funding/spending on areas of staffing, training, equipment, and apparatus purchasing.
 - \$5.3 million directly to the LAFD for:
 - US&R
 - Haz-Mat
 - Regional Training Group (RTG)
 - Regional Staffing Positions:
 - Joint Hazard Assessment Team (JHAT)
 - Critical Infrastructure Key Resources (CIKR)
 - Joint Regional Intelligence Center (JRIC)
 - Proposed New Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF from the Arson Counter Terrorism Section, Arson Investigator) position
 - Proposed New Major Events Position (Captain I)
 - Port Dive Operations Group (PDOG)
 - Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

In addition to the UASI and FEMA US&R grants, there are several other federal grants that the LAFD has historically applied for:

AFG (Assistance to Firefighters Grant)

- AFG 22 - \$1.8 million – Lucas Devices funding through Kaiser Funds; in process.
- AFG 24 - Applied for \$1.47M for Thermal Imaging Cameras. Withdrew grant application after Fire Foundation purchased these through donations.

SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response) Grant

- SAFER 22 - \$7.7 million – 12 FFs to open an ENG at FS 7; CAO producing final report to present to Public Safety at the end of September.
- SAFER 23 - Applied for \$38.6 Million - 60 FFs to open 5 new Engine Companies. Did not receive the Grant Award.

High Frequency Communications Program

- HF 2021 - \$56k award - project complete, LAFD reimbursed, and grant closed.

HMGP (Hazard Mitigation Grant Program)

- DR-4407 - \$86k award for a generator at Fire Station 46, completed this project. Reimbursement will be transferred to LAFD from CAO once the 3-year audit period is complete.

PSGP (Port Security Grant Program)

- PSGP 21 - \$475k – Ship-handling course (Voith Schneider) and Shipboard Firefighting Training prop. Currently spending.
- PSGP 22 - \$224k Dive Simulator & Sonar equipment. Open September 2022.
- PSGP 24 - \$428k – Fire Boat Pilot Training & Sonar equipment. Award announcements anticipated by the end of September 2024.
- PSGP 25 - Anticipated application period to open in Spring 2025

As previously described, there are many more grant opportunities available if the administrative support and City process would allow such as.

Other Federal Grant Opportunities and Funding (FY2024) \$2.634 Billion:

- Hazardous Materials Grants Programs (US DOT) \$100M
 - Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP)
 - Assistance for Local Emergency Response Training (ALERT)
 - Hazardous Materials Instructor Training (HMIT)
 - Supplemental Public Sector Training (SPST);
 - Community Safety (CS); and
 - Hazardous Materials Safety Inspection (HMSI)
- Cybersecurity (FEMA) \$279M
- Emergency Management Performance Grant (FEMA) \$319.5M
- Emergency Operations Center Grant Program (FEMA) \$103.2M
- Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S, FEMA) \$36M
- Homeland Security Grant Program (FEMA) \$1.008B
 - State Homeland Security Program \$373.5M
 - Urban Area Security Initiative \$553.5M
 - Operation Stonegarden: \$81M
- Non-Profit Security Grant Program (FEMA) \$454.5M
- Pre-Disaster Mitigation program (PDM, FEMA) \$233M
- Port Security Grant Program (FEMA) \$90M
- Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program (FEMA) \$10.8M

The biggest issues facing the Grants Section and the grant process across the board that limits the pursuit and awarding of grant funding opportunities is our own City processes. The Fire Department's pursuit of grants opportunities is limited for several reasons including Grant Section staffing, the Grant Award's Performance Periods, the City's established approval processes, the equipment purchasing process, and the support costs associated with Grant Awards.

1. Grant Section Staffing - The LAFD's Grants Section's staffing has been significantly reduced over the past several years after positions that were vacated either from retirements or promotions of members. At its peak and optimal performance, the LAFD's Grant Section had 5 full time civilian employees, one Battalion Chief, and one Captain I position. Currently, that civilian workload has been absorbed by a single Management Analyst, whose position was vacated effective February 24, 2025 following her lateral transfer to another City Department. Requests for full staffing authorities and funding reinstatement have not been approved, over several budgetary cycles. Although two positions were tentatively budgeted for the 2025-2026 Fiscal Year, these are facing cuts

ahead of their installment. The greatest risk potential for this is defaulting on the grant award requirements and reporting. This potential failure could result in the loss of the previously granted awards, with full repayment of funding accepted and spent, and could significantly, and negatively, impact future grant award applications. Recommendations have been made through channels to build the Grants Section out to a more optimal level which would require the approval of new authorities and the budgeted funding to support their salaries and employee benefits.

2. Grant Awards Performance Periods and the City's Approval processes - The LAFD's ability to execute on a grant award is highly dependent on the performance period of the grant. For example, a 3-year performance period requires that all provisions of the grant application and award be fulfilled from the time the grant is awarded to the end of that award period, including all spending, reimbursements, and reporting. Factors that impact the Department's ability to pursue grant periods less than 2 years are the approval processes in place within the City that can take up to 12-months to vet out, seek approvals, transfer and front-load funds to be spent or used to purchase, complete purchases or spending, record the appropriate documentation, and seek reimbursement to the City for those encumbered funds from the grant award source (i.e. FEMA, CALOES, etc.). Performance periods less than 3 years are extremely difficult to execute on due to this internal process with grant awards. Other factors that limit the Department to pursue grants include Capital improvements and all required approvals (i.e. EHPs and Historical Building Classifications), inflated costs associated with construction and remodeling in the City of Los Angeles, permitting process, and timelines when contractually obligated to work with other City Departments. These issues increase the likelihood of not completing all required work within the given performance period and the City of Los Angeles having to cover any additional costs above those awarded to meet the conditions of the approved grant award.
3. The money spent through the bid process, especially those using City vendors which allow for potentially inflated purchase prices, could be utilized to purchase more equipment or positions. The City's purchasing requirements and process regulate that any purchase over \$1,000 must go out to bid. With the rising costs of everything in the Country, that \$1,000 maximum pretty much ensures all purchases go out to bid. It is in this bidding process that credits are given to certain companies for political reasons and usually result in the LAFD and City of Los Angeles spending more on an item because of the company we must go through to meet the City's objectives. This in turn quickly consumes the grant funding. The extremely slow bid process also increases the time it takes to take delivery of a product, which causes the Department to bump up against the deadline for the period of performance.
4. Support Costs of Grant Awards - While some Federal Grants have Cost Share components that Cities or Departments are required to financially cover (i.e. 10-50% of a grant award), some grants do not have a cost share. An example of this is the SAFER Grant. There exist however support costs beyond the hiring of new Firefighters. If the Award covered the opening of a new Fire Apparatus, the staffing salary differentials (i.e. Fire Captain, Engineer, Apparatus Operator, Firefighter/Paramedic, etc.) and overtime would have to be covered by the City. Additionally, any capital improvements to a fire facility or station and the purchase and equipping of those new fire apparatuses are not included in these grant awards. These support costs have been recently and

conservatively calculated to cost approximately the same amount as the original award, over the three-year performance period for a SAFER Grant award.

FISCAL IMPACT

Potential fiscal impact dependent on the degree of federal funding cuts.

CONCLUSION

In addition to federal grants, there are many other grants offered and awarded by the State of CA (Cal OES) in conjunction with their training facilitator California Specialized Training Institute (CSTI). That list is in addition to all of the funding described above.

When looking at the given question whether cutbacks at the federal level would affect the LAFD, the answer is yes. Depending on the degree to which funding is cut, we could stand to lose upwards of \$49 million in annual funding. This means unless budgeted line items cover the losses, most if not all US&R and hazardous materials training and equipment would be gone in addition to losing numerous critical positions such as the JHAT and JRIC.

Board report prepared by Adam Knabe, Battalion Chief, Disaster Response Section and Shawn Tukua, Battalion Chief, Grants Section.