

2012 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program



“Successfully Navigating Your AFG Grant”
April 19, 2012



FEMA

Successfully Navigating Your AFG Grant

Today's Presenters

AFG Section Chief

- David Gudinas
- 202-786-9611
- David.Gudinas@DHS.GOV

Fire Program Specialist

- Kevin B. Piatt
- 202-786-9822
- Kevin.Piatt@DHS.GOV

Today's Objectives

- AFG Appropriation Law
- AFG FY12 Program Funding Overview
- AFG FY11 Award Overview
- FY12 AFG Changes
- Understanding the Award Process (funding mandates, set asides, etc)

Today's Objectives

- Understanding the Peer Panel Review Process
- After the Award – What's Next
- Best Practices & Common Mistakes
- Procurement Integrity
- Get Involved
- Q&A

AFG & The Law

AFG and the LAW

- **Authorizing Authority for Program:** AFG is derived from the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. §§ 2229 et seq.), as amended.
- **Re-Appropriation Authority for Program:** Department of Defense and Full Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011 (Public Law 112-10, Section 2, Division B, Title VI Homeland Security).
- *www.THOMAS.gov*

AFG Appropriation Law

- Set Asides
 - Vehicles – No more than 25%
 - EMS – No more than 3.5%
 - » Non Affiliated EMS – No more than 2%
- “Representative” of Fire Service Demographics

AFG Appropriation Law

- No more than 47 percent of the available funds may be granted to career organizations and departments.
- No less than 33.5 percent of the available funds must be granted to combination organizations (organizations and departments with both paid career and volunteer active duty members).
- No less than 19.5 percent of the available funds must be granted to all-volunteer organizations (organizations and departments with no active duty paid career members).

Nine Stakeholder Organizations

- IAFC: International Association of Fire Chiefs
- IAFF: International Association of Firefighters
- NVFC: National Volunteer Fire Council
- NFPA: National Fire Protection Association
- NASFM: National Association of State Fire Marshals
- IAAI: International Association of Arson Investigators
- ISFSI: International Society of Fire Service Instructors
- NAFTD: North American Fire Training Directors
- CFSI: Congressional Fire Services Institute

AFG Program Overview

AFG Application & Awards

Year-to-Year

<u>Year</u>	<u>Applications</u>	<u>Req (Fed Share)</u>	<u>Awards</u>
2009	19,782	\$3.17B	5,211
2010	16,231	\$2.55B	2,934
2011	16,491	\$2.85 B	1,714

AFG Application & Awards

Year-to-Year

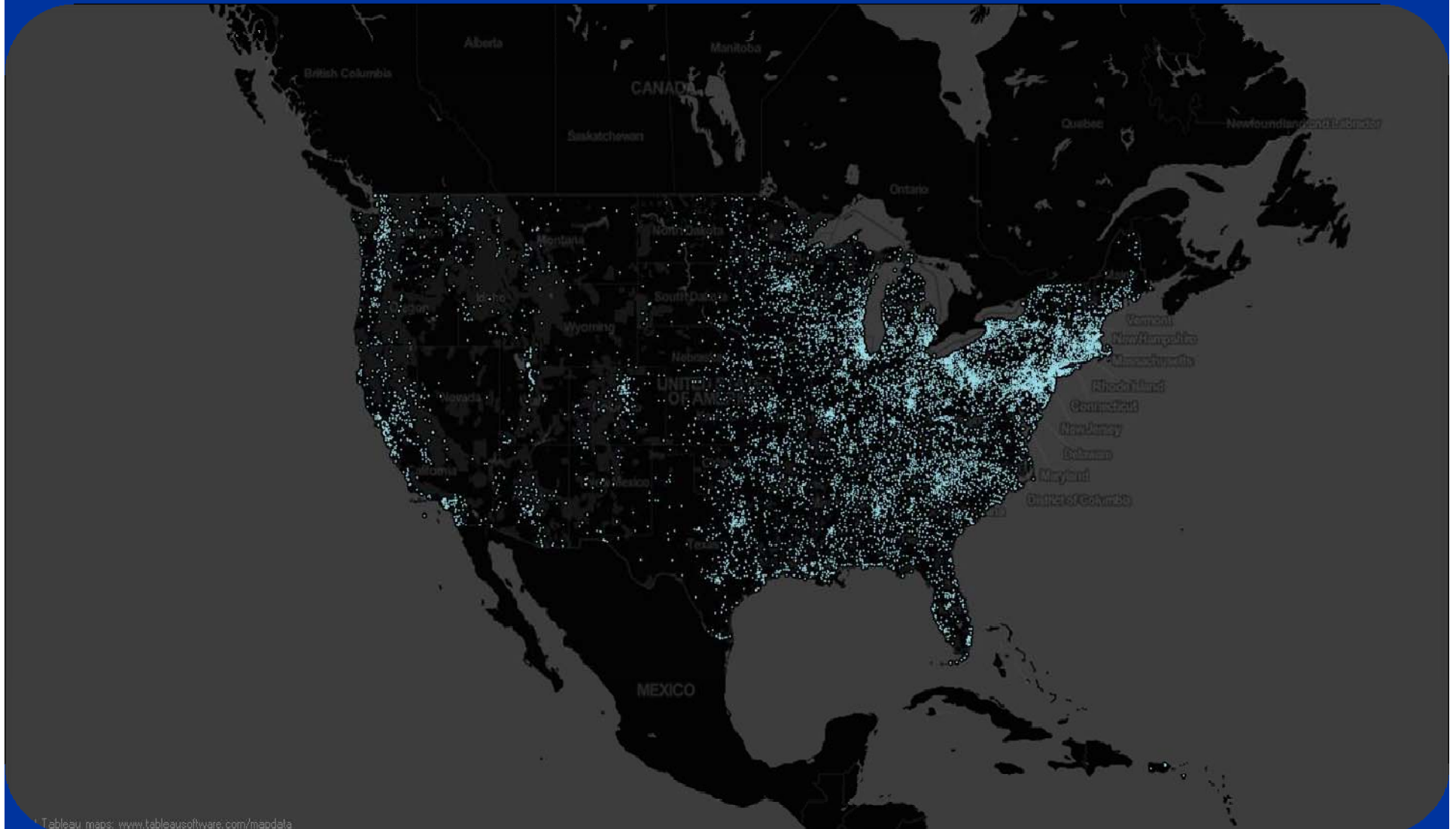
<u>Year</u>	<u>Average Award (Federal Share)</u>
2009	\$97,447
2010	\$115,387
2011	\$199,447

AFG Program Overview

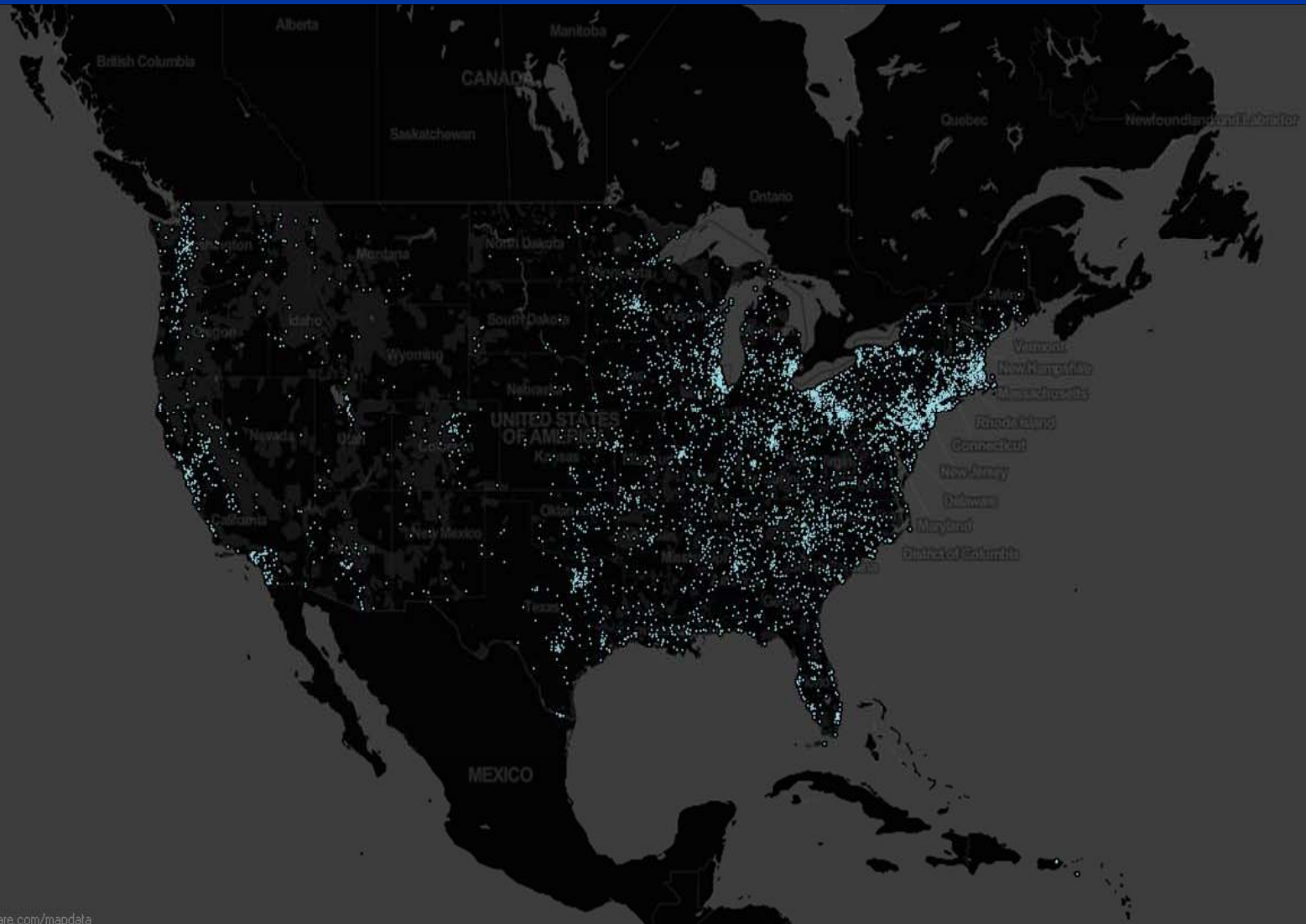
AFG Funding Levels

	<u>Appropriated</u>	<u>Available for Award</u>
• AFG	FY11 = \$404,190,000 / \$345,746,980 FY12 = \$337,500,000 / \$285,625,000	
• SAFER	FY11 = \$404,190,00 / \$380,746,980 FY12 = \$337,500,000 / \$325,625,000	
• FP&S	FY11 = \$35,000,000 (funded out of AFG) FY12 = \$35,000,000 (funded out of AFG)	

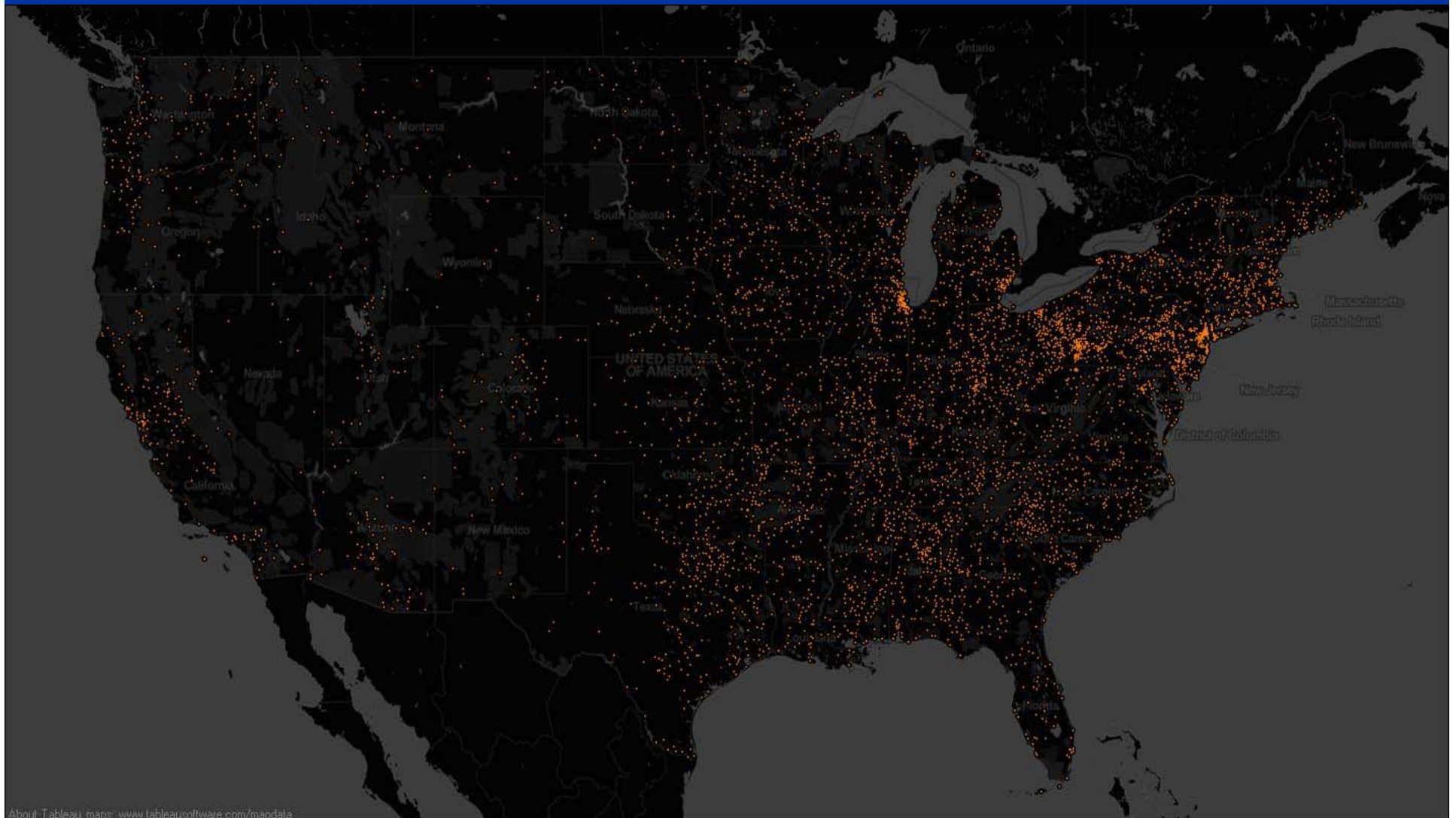
2011 AFG Operations & Safety Applications SUBMITTED = 10,819



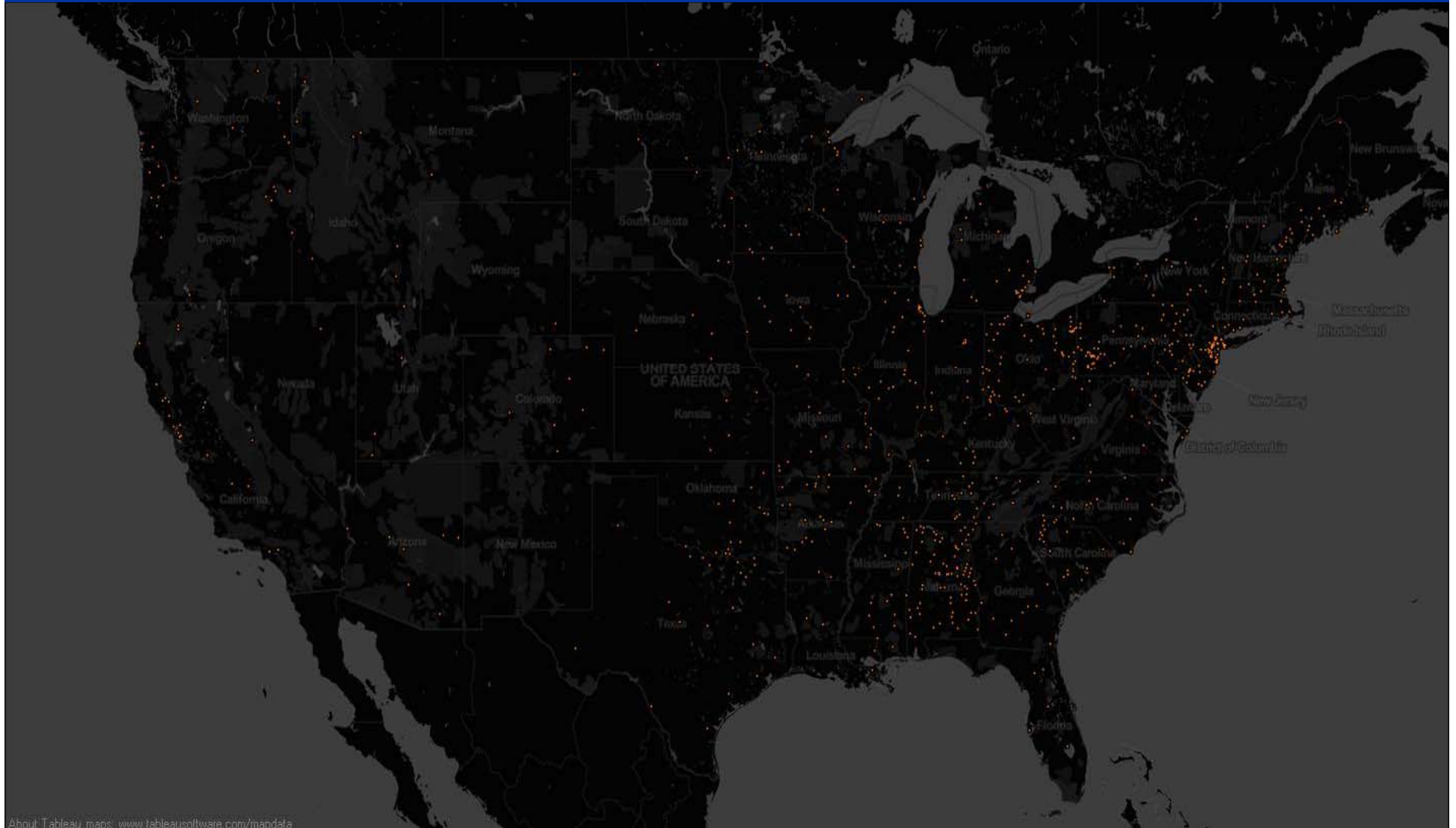
2011 AFG Operations & Safety Applications Paneled = 4,735



2011 AFG Vehicle Applications SUBMITTED = 5,678



2011 AFG Vehicle Applications Paneled = 745



Summary

- Steady or increased number of applications
- Appropriated funding continues to decline
- Average award amount sharply increasing
- Less applications overall selected for peer panel review

*Result: More competitive application periods.
Every question counts.*

FY 2012 AFG Reminders

- Total application score is still 50 percent from the electronic pre-score and 50 percent from the panelists' scores for all projects.
- AFG is again partnering with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) by providing a limited free Web link to the NFPA guidelines.
- Get Ready Guides have been updated.

FY 2012 AFG Changes

- The Program Guidance has a new format (FOA) which still accents the funding priorities. (High, Medium, Low).
- When requesting training that accompanies equipment, PPE, vehicles etc, you will now make that request under “additional funding” in the same request details section.
- When requesting multiple vehicles, they will now be separate line items; with separate narratives etc.

FY 2012 AFG Changes

- When requesting items or program(s) in any area of the application you will be limited to the categories listed in the drop down menus.
- The term “Other” has been deleted except in additional funding.
- In order for equipment or PPE to be considered obsolete it must be 10 years to two NFPA cycles old.

Understanding the AFG Award Process

Understanding the Award Process

- All applications undergo an initial pre-score
- Each “activity” is scored independently
 - One or All activities may score well enough to be selected for Peer Panel Review
- FEMA selects sufficient applications, based on initial pre-scoring & Congressional “set asides”, to be peer panel reviewed

Understanding the Award Process

– The Peer Panel Review Process

- Approximately 200 – 225 peers participate
- Peers are nominated by each of the 9 major Fire Service Organizations
- Peers are assigned to review “like” organizations
 - Career representative will review career department applications. Volunteers to review volunteer applications. Etc.
 - Goal is to truly have each application reviewed by someone who is from a similar department
- Each application is scored based on:
 - Product description
 - Cost benefit
 - Financial need (in Characteristics II)
 - Affect on Daily Operations

Understanding the Award Process

- Prior to award recommendation, each application will undergo a “technical review”
 - Review for eligibility (organization)
 - Compliance and current with past awards
 - Are the requested items eligible and reasonable (number requested & pricing)
- Application details will be reviewed by a federal member of the Program office
- If recommended, the application will be submitted for further review & award
- Any award greater than \$1M requires congressional notification prior to award

Common Mistakes

Most Common Application Mistakes

- The number one & two reasons applicants have trouble with their applications?
 1. Failure to read the Program Guidance thoroughly.
 2. Failure to take advantage of the Help Desk or Get Ready Guides.

Common Application Mistakes

- Using a single character as a “place holder” in the application and hitting submit.
 - Proof read. Proof read again. Then have someone else NOT familiar with the grant application proof read it.
- Inserting false numbers into questions
 - Example: using a 1 or 999,999,999 for questions related to population, square mileage, number of active firefighters.
- Read the questions carefully!
 - Example: *Are you trained to use this equipment?*
 - If not, are you requesting training, or will you be trained to use this equipment?

Common Application Mistakes

– Vehicle applications

- selecting “replacing an existing apparatus” but on the next question where it is asking the age of the vehicle to be replaced” you put N/A.
- When a grant writer is preparing an application on the departments behalf remember, you are responsible for all of the information they include.
- Be weary of “template” narratives
 - Several instances of panelist recognizing a narrative they have already read
 - Template narratives do not tell “your” story and are risky
 - It is recommended that the narrative be specific to your department

Common Application Mistakes

- Requesting more PPE than personnel listed
- Failing to list the age of you SCBA'S to be replaced
- EMS trained to the BLS level asking for ALS equipment

Common Questions from Applicants

Common Questions From Applicants

- Why does it take so long for the turn down letters to be sent out?
- If I am applying for a vehicle, do I have to “replace” or take out of service an existing vehicle?
- Why does all the money always go to the “other guys”?
 - AFG is required to make awards in close proportion to the current fire service demographics (i.e. X% to volunteers, Y% to career, Z% to combination, no more than A% for vehicles, etc.)

Common Questions from Grantees

- We need to take a loan to secure the remaining funding for our vehicle award. Can I use the vehicle as collateral?
- Do I have to go out to bid or can I use a neighboring departments existing contract?
- Can I use GSA, or another similar purchasing schedule?
- We are requesting new PPE...what is the difference between “torn & tattered” and “obsolete”?

**You Got an AFG
Award....
Now What?**

Our department got an AFG award...

Now what?

- You will receive an award notification in your AFG mail center inbox.
 - You will no longer be contacted in advance of the award notification.
- I got an award, but it was reduced from what I applied for. What can I do?
 - Contact the AFG program office and explain your situation and request reinstatement of all or part of the reduction
 - *If* additional funding is approved, AFG program office can amend your award.
- You will have 30 days to accept your award

Our department got an AFG award...

Now what?

- Start early to ensure you complete your project within the period of performance.
- Draw down your funds in a timely manner.
- Contact your Regional Fire Program Specialist with any questions or issues.
- Keep all documents & records –they are subject to audit
- Remember “ALL” goods and or services “MUST” be completed within the period of performance.

Procurement Integrity

Procurement Integrity

- You MUST follow your local or state procurement procedures. They MUST also meet FEDERAL procurement law as outlined in 44 CFR 13.36.
- In most cases, you MUST have a competitive bid process
 - Multiple bidders
 - Bid specs may not be proprietary

Procurement Integrity

- Bid Documents
 - Your bid documents should reflect your departments stated needs, technical requirements, and required support
 - May use “best value” evaluation if allowed by your jurisdiction.
 - Best value is not necessarily the same as low bid
- Sole Source Procurement
 - May be used in certain circumstances
 - Seek review and approval of your FEMA representative prior to engaging in any sole source procurement.

Procurement Integrity

- You MUST maintain accurate records and have them available. All awards are subject to a possible audit or desk review.
- All records must be kept for 3 years after the final closeout
- Any award greater than \$500,000 is subject to an A133 audit.

Procurement Integrity

- “Grantees and subgrantees will maintain a written code of standards of conduct governing the performance of their employees engaged in the award and administration of contracts” - (44 CFR 13.36 (3))

Procurement Integrity

So what does this mean?

Procurement Integrity

1. You must have written procurement standards.
2. No employee, officer or agent, may participate in the selection, or award of federal funds if there is a conflict of interest, **real or apparent**.
3. Will neither solicit, nor accept, gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value from contractors.
4. *Grantees may set minimum rules where the financial interest is not substantial.*

Procurement Integrity - Protests

- 44 CFR 13.36(b) provide that “.... (11) Grantees and subgrantees alone will be responsible, in accordance with good administrative practice and sound business judgment, *for the settlement of all contractual and administrative issues arising out of procurements.*

Procurement Integrity - Protests

- Federal agencies will not substitute their judgment for that of the grantee or subgrantee unless the matter is primarily a Federal concern.
- Violations of law will be referred to the local, State, or Federal authority having proper jurisdiction.

Procurement Integrity - Protests

- Grantees and subgrantees will have protest procedures to handle and resolve disputes relating to their procurements and shall in all instances disclose information regarding the protest to the awarding agency.
- **A protestor must exhaust all administrative remedies with the grantee and subgrantee before pursuing a protest with the Federal agency.**

Procurement Integrity - Protests

- Reviews of protests by the Federal agency will be limited to:
 - (i) Violations of Federal law or regulations and the standards of this section (violations of State or local law will be under the jurisdiction of State or local authorities) and
 - (ii) Violations of the grantee protest procedures for failure to review a complaint or protest.
 - Protests received by the Federal agency other than those specified above will be referred to the grantee.

Procurement Integrity - Examples

- Q: A department has 500 breathing apparatus (brand A). They get a grant to replace 100 old, obsolete breathing apparatus. Can they submit for a sole source purchase of Brand A, and if applicable, or available, conduct a bid to various suppliers of that brand?
 - A: Yes, in certain circumstances. Recommended that you review your procurement plans with your FEMA representative and seek approval in advance.

Procurement Integrity - Examples

- Q: May a grantee use established purchasing schedules such as a state purchasing schedule, GSA, HGAC, Florida Sheriff's Association in lieu of a formal bid?
 - A: **YES.**

Procurement Integrity - Examples

- Q: You have received a grant for the purchase of a vehicle and want to finance the remaining balance/cost share. May you place a lien on the vehicle to be purchased in order to secure the loan?
 - A: NO. The government has first right to the value of the vehicle to the extent of the federal funds used. You must use another form of collateral.

Procurement Integrity - Examples

- Q: If you were awarded a grant for the purchase of a vehicle. May the grantee utilize an existing contract, which explicitly states that they may tag onto (i.e. COG agreements), so long as there are no material changes to the specifications?
 - A: No. This option eliminates the basis of competition since there is only vendor/product option available to the grantee.

Procurement Integrity - Examples

- Q: A grantee received a grant to replace a portion of their P25 compliant portable radios. Can they submit for a sole source purchase of Brand A, and if applicable, or available, conduct a bid to various suppliers of that brand?
 - A: Yes, in certain circumstances. Recommended that you review your procurement plans with your FEMA representative and seek approval in advance.

Procurement Integrity - Examples

- If you have a question “if” your procurement process is acceptable, contact either your regional FEMA representative, or the AFG program office.

Record Keeping & Grant Administration

Record Keeping

- FEMA requires that you keep all grant records for a period of three years after you receive the final closeout letter.
- What determines a receipt? Any legitimate invoice that clearly shows the actual date of purchase/delivery and the amount.
- Keep copies of check(s) used for payment of grant related items.
- Do your best to keep these purchases separate from other orders.

Updating Your Application

- Keep the contact information “current at all times”.
- Update your contact information such as, e-mail and phone numbers when applicable.
- If someone new takes over the grant administration, please take the time to educate them on how it works. Or simply have them call our help desk to get started.
- Write down and save the user ID and password in a safe place.

Excess Funds

Excess Funds Option 1

Grantees have **four** options for the use of the excess funds:

1. Use the greater of 1 percent of their award amount or \$5,000 **of excess funds (whichever is greater)** to continue or expand the activities for which they received the award.

Excess Funds Option 2

Wellness/Fitness Program

If the grantee does not have a Wellness and Fitness program that contains the four elements of annual physicals, periodic screenings, immunizations, and behavior health, they can apply for one or all of the elements in an amendment. You may use up to 50 % of you total excess fund for this.

Excess Funds option 3

Training Program

Grantee may use up to 50 % of the total excess funds to either enhance or create a training program. The funds may be use for classes and basic teaching tools such as books or computers etc.

Excess Funds Option 4

Fire Prevention Program

Grantee may use up to 100 % of to create or expand a Fire/Injury Prevention program.

Excess Funds Option 5

A combination of programs.

Best Practices

Top 10 Best Practices

1. Start preparing early & read the program guidance.
2. Align your departments “needs” assessment with the current funding priorities
3. Tell “your” departments story
4. Read each question carefully, then answer.
5. Have your application read by someone else before submitting

Top 10 Best Practices

6. Submit your application before the deadline
 7. Make sure you include ALL eligible cost as part of your application
 1. EHP review
 2. state taxes
 3. vehicle performance bonds
 8. Make sure your project can and will be done within your grants period of performance
 9. Have your bid specifications ready when you receive your award (be proactive)
 10. Ensure you have support from your local government leaders
- ***BONUS: Call the AFG Help Desk with ANY questions!***

AFG Resources

- Website
 - www.fema.gov/firegrants
- Get Ready Guides
- Quick Facts
- Tutorials & Videos

AFG Help Desk

- Phone: 866-274-0960
- Email: firegrants@fema.gov

Questions?

