



Coffee Break Training - Management Science Program

Funding Alternatives

No. MS-2011-6 July 20, 2011

Learning Objective: The student shall learn various funding alternatives in order to fund fire and emergency medical services (EMS) in their community.

Local budget pressures for fire and EMS in the United States are requiring the use of a wide array of fundraising approaches beyond traditional methods such as taxes, loans, and leasing.

These funding alternatives range from small fees for special services to major new sources of funds such as benefit assessments which pay for as much as 40 percent of the budget for some fire departments. The alternatives includes impact development fees, in which private developers pay for virtually all new fire stations and their associated apparatus and equipment, and subscription charges, where households pay a flat rate and then are absolved from any further payments associated with EMS beyond those covered by their medical insurance.

Fees for fire prevention services are being used to pay much of the cost of fire prevention, a part of the fire department budget that often receives little public support and continues to be hard to adequately fund. To motivate a fire safe behavior and achieve better compliance with codes, some departments are using a variety of fees and citations for repeat inspections, false alarms, and code violations.

The impact of budget pressures is especially complex for fire protection and EMS to deal with because there are increasing concerns for firefighter safety, increasing demands for EMS, and an increasing array of other services such as hazardous material spills, technical rescue incidents, and advanced life support (ALS). The addition of new services also offers new opportunities for funding as charging for the additional services can sometimes offset some or all of the costs of both the new and old services.

Citizens often balk at new fundraising projects/programs and need to be brought into the discussion of the purpose and mechanism of the funding at the earliest opportunity. This is necessary to keep a good working relationship between the fire service and the communities we serve.



Carroll County, MD – Engine 142 – Winfield VFD

Miscellaneous Funding Ideas

- Direct solicitation (door-to-door or direct mail)
- Fundraising events (carnivals, dinners, raffles, bingos)
- Sale of products (calendars, hall rentals, photo campaigns)
- Applying for grants
- Private foundations
- Corporate donations

For archived downloads, go to:

www.usfa.dhs.gov/nfa/coffee-break/