

City of Alexandria, Virginia
FY 2023 Proposed Operating Budget & CIP
Budget Questions & Answers

April 4, 2022

Question: Can you provide the fiscal impact if the City were to fund trainings and related expenses for Firefighters? It's my understanding that they typically pay for trainings and expenses such as hotels, mileage, and food. Please include analysis as to whether this one-time expense would be eligible as an expenditure of American Rescue Plan Act funds.

Response:

The Fire Department receives a number of training requests from employees throughout the year, in addition to hosting and sponsoring trainings here in Alexandria. The Fire Department also works to partner with other surrounding jurisdictions to take advantage when training opportunities are available (Fairfax, Arlington, etc).

The Department does pay for many of these trainings, along with per diem, mileage, etc. The Department is constantly evaluating its training strategy to see what trainings are most in need given qualifications/certifications.

Consistent with all other departments, the Fire Department's training budget was reduced in FY 21 and FY 22. This has caused the Fire Department to carefully evaluate all training requests that come in, and sometimes deny funding/reimbursement for trainings as they may not be a good cost/benefit (i.e. – a training for only one person that requires multi-state travel, in an area that is not a high priority of need). In these cases, an employee may be told that they can attend if they pay their own way; often times, they elect to do so. The training reductions implemented in FY21 and FY22 have been restored in the FY23 proposed budget.

Adequately funding travel and training is imperative if the department is going to develop future leaders and keep attuned to emerging issues in the EMS and Fire industry. As part of the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) requirements for accreditation, departments are required to identify both internal and external trainings and training resources that are required. CPSE lists 5 core competencies that require sufficient training and training resources for accreditation. Participation in regional and state conferences is integral to building relationships, sharing information, and developing and maintaining a highly effective workforce. The benefits of sending staff to conferences broadens exposure to a multitude of issues, but It is also necessary to maintain our ability to mitigate complex emergencies. Hazardous materials, trench rescue, water rescue, rope rescue, confined space rescue, response to building collapse, and Advanced Life Support staff greatly benefit from external training opportunities.