



# DOA Local Government Report

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## The Service Award Program Benefits For Volunteer Emergency Responders Matched By State

The Service Award Program (SAP), formerly called the Length of Service Award Program is a tax-deferred benefit program for volunteer fire fighters, emergency medical technicians and first responders. State funds match local investments and provide the benefit to the volunteers. The goal of the program is to assist municipalities with training and retaining volunteers. According to the National Volunteer Fire Council, volunteer firefighter participation has declined by 10% over the past 20 years.

The goals of SAP are:

- Encourage experienced emergency response volunteers to stay in their positions;
- Provide communities a tool to assist in Wisconsin's recruitment and retention challenges; and
- Provide incentives that increase in value over the span of a volunteers' service.

Participation in the program is easy; a municipality must simply adopt a resolution, work with a program vendor approved by the SAP Board, and financially contribute to the program. The state then annually matches municipal contributions up to a set amount. The 2009 state matching contribution rate was \$312.34 per responder. Municipalities can choose to contribute more or less than this amount, however, the state only matches up to the set amount. Upon reaching age 60, each volunteer with over 20 years of service collects the full amount in his or her account. Volunteers retiring with more than ten years experience (but less than 20 years) collect a portion of their account.

Over the program's first eight years, participation increased from 85 departments in 2001 to 222 departments at the end of 2008. During the same period, individual participation increased from 2,152 volunteers to 6,206 volunteers.

The SAP Board, appointed by the Governor, provides oversight for the program. If you wish to receive further information about specific benefit options available for your volunteers, please contact the following program vendors to speak with them directly about the benefit options they provide.

- Penflex, Inc. / UBS Financial Services (800) 742-1409
- RBC Wealth Management / BPA (414) 347-7030
- VFIS / The Horton Group (800) 242-9028

For more information about the Service Award Program see the program's web page at <http://www.doa.state.wi.us/section.asp?linkid=56&locid=9> or contact Chris Connor at the Department of Administration at [christopher.connor@wisconsin.gov](mailto:christopher.connor@wisconsin.gov) or (608) 267-2704.

## The State Trust Fund Loan Program

The Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL) works with local governments to maintain and improve Wisconsin's public infrastructure with the State Trust Fund Loan Program. This is one of the largest public lending programs in the state.

These loans can be used for a wide variety of public purposes, including:

- School repairs and improvements, including the installation of more energy-efficient heating and lighting systems.
- General public works projects, including roads, town halls, airports, sewer systems, wastewater facilities, trucks, and emergency vehicles.
- Economic development through TIF (tax incremental financing) districts and downtown revitalization projects.

Perhaps most importantly, more than 95% of the interest collected on Trust Fund loans go back to the BCPL and is used to provide critical support for K-12 public school libraries throughout the state – a benefit no commercial lender can match.

The application process is easy, there are no loan origination or application fees, and loans can be prepaid without penalty between January 1st and August 31st each year. Interest rates are competitive and can be fixed for terms of up to 20 years. Loan interest rates are subject to change from time to time based on economic conditions and availability of funds.

For more information on State Trust Fund Loans and the BCPL, go to their web page at <http://bcpl.wisconsin.gov> or contact Trust Fund Loan Specialist Scott Eastwood (608) 266-0034 or [scott.eastwood@wisconsin.gov](mailto:scott.eastwood@wisconsin.gov).

## End Annexation Disputes with a Cooperative Boundary Agreement

'Annexation' is a fighting word to many people and it is associated with contentious boundary, intergovernmental, and land use issues. The unpredictable nature of annexation can put communities in a reactive and adversarial position. However, many Wisconsin communities are leaving their annexation troubles behind by developing a cooperative boundary agreement with consensus on boundaries, land uses, revenue sharing, and service and governance issues.

Cooperative boundary agreements are authorized under Wis. Stats. 66.0307. The statute requires broad notice to area residents and jurisdictions, a cooperative plan for the agreement territory, a public hearing and comment period, an advisory referendum (if requested) and a public interest review by the Department of Administration. Forty-four Wisconsin communities have adopted a cooperative boundary agreement, while another 15 communities are in the process of negotiating an agreement. Controversy over annexation has served as a gateway to the communities agreeing to cooperate rather than fight. In an effort to prevent future annexation fights, some communities are proactively developing agreements.

Communities cooperatively decide which issues are to be resolved by the agreement. For example, communities determine the size of the agreement territory, the duration of the agreement, and the agreement's terms and conditions. Local discretion results in unique boundary agreements and increased support once adopted. The agreements are viewed as the product of local vision and consensus with input from citizens and area stakeholders.

To learn more, please visit the Department's cooperative boundary agreement website at [www.doa.state.wi.us/municipalboundaryreview](http://www.doa.state.wi.us/municipalboundaryreview). For more information, contact Erich Schmidtke at the Department of Administration at (608) 266-3200 or [erich.Schmidtke@wisconsin.gov](mailto:erich.Schmidtke@wisconsin.gov).

## **USDA Funding Available for Essential Community Facilities Projects**

USDA Rural Development (RD) has \$25.5 million available for community facility projects in Wisconsin in the form of guaranteed loans, low interest loans and grants. In addition to these funds, the Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, has set a goal of investing \$100 million of USDA's Community Facilities ARRA funds for public libraries.

Funding under the Community Facilities Programs is also available to assist community facility projects in the Know Your Farmer Know Your Food initiative. This initiative was launched in September 2009 by Secretary Vilsack to help develop and support local and regional food systems to support local farmers, strengthen rural communities, promote healthy eating and protect natural resources. Examples of community facility projects that support local and regional food systems include food banks, school cafeterias, farmers markets, community gardens and community kitchens. A local food system is typically within a 30-mile radius from the food source to the consumer. Regional food systems cover a greater distance and can cross state lines. <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/knowyourfarmer?navid=KNOWYOURFARMER>.

In addition to libraries and local food systems, other eligible projects are facilities that provide essential services to rural communities such as police and fire protection, education, health and dental care, nursing homes, community centers and cultural facilities.

The purpose of the program is to provide loans and grants to develop or improve essential Community Facilities located in rural areas, cities and villages of up to 20,000 residents. Funds can be used to buy, build, enlarge or improve real estate, buildings and equipment. Loans and grants are available to public entities such as municipalities, counties, and special-purpose districts, as well as non-profit corporations and tribal governments. Direct loans can be made to applicants who are unable to obtain commercial credit. The current interest rate through March 31, 2010 is just 4.00%. Rural Development can provide loan guarantees made and serviced by lenders such as banks.

Community Facilities Grants are authorized on a graduated scale. Applicants located in smaller communities with low populations and low incomes will receive a higher percentage of grants. Grant funding limitations are based on population and income, economic feasibility and availability of funds.

For more information, please contact Brian Deaner at (715) 345-7610 or go to USDA's web page at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/wi/>.

### **Assistance to Fire Fighters and EMS Grant Program**

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's 2010 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program application will be open from late March through the month of April. Eligible applicants for AFG are all fire departments in the United States and all non-affiliated Emergency Medical Service crews. It is recommended that all potential applicants read and follow the Program Guidance, found on the following web page: [www.firegrantsupport.com](http://www.firegrantsupport.com).

Grant workshops for the AFG will be held in various locations around the state, which are listed below. The workshops are offered free of charge and no registration is required.

- March 15 Dodgeville Fire Department, 401 North Level Street – 7 pm
- March 16 Sun Prairie Station West Side Station, 2598 W. Main St. – 7 pm
- March 17 Wausau, NTC, 1000 West Campus Drive – 7 pm \*will be televised at satellite campuses.
- March 18 Bellevue Fire Department, 3100 Eaton Road, Green Bay – 7 pm
- March 22 Ashland City Hall, 601 W. Main Street – 7 pm
- March 23 Eagle River Fire Department, 820 East Pine Street – 7 pm
- March 24 Eau Claire, CVTC, Emergency Service Ed. Ctr., 3623 Campus Road – 7 pm
- March 30 West Allis Fire Department, 7332 West National Avenue – 10 am

For more information or grant assistance, contact Dawn Vick at the Wisconsin Department of Administration at (608) 266-7043 or [dawn.vick@wisconsin.gov](mailto:dawn.vick@wisconsin.gov).

## Census 2010 is Almost Here

Census Day is April 1, 2010. Households will begin receiving Census questionnaires in late February or early March. The instructions for this year's Census form will instruct people to fill in the form to account for everyone living at their address as of April 1, 2010.

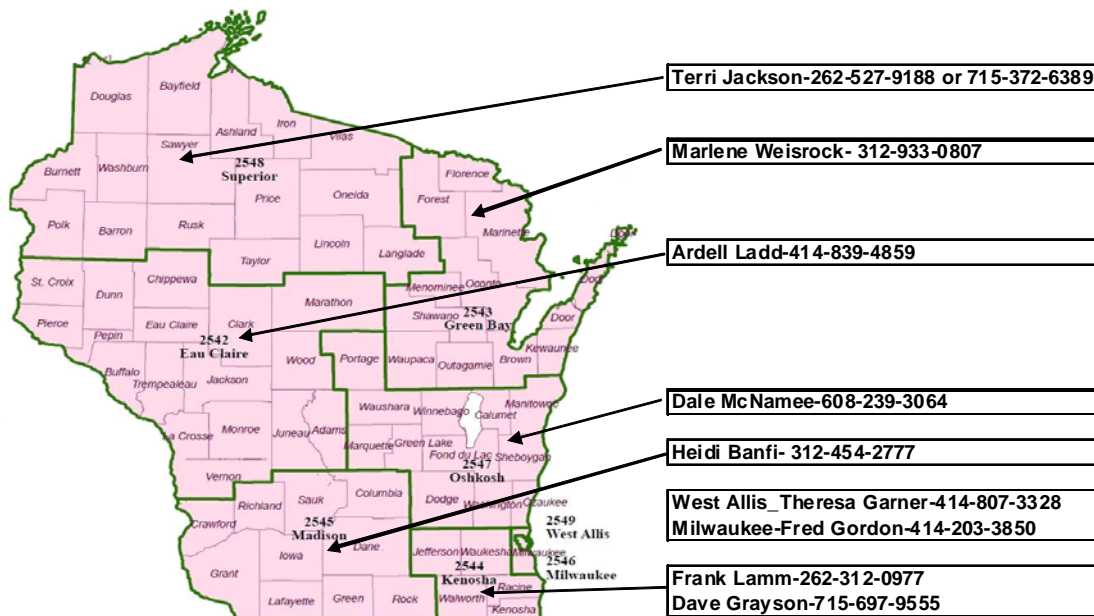
Local governments can encourage participation in the Census by mentioning the Census in public meetings and other communications. Some useful talking points and important Census dates are below. Census Representatives are also willing to appear at public meetings and events to encourage Census participation and answer questions.

- The 2010 Census form asks only 10 questions and is expected to take only 10 minutes to complete. This form will be the shortest in the more than 200 year history of the Census.
- Citizens should know that personal information provided to the Census cannot be shared with anyone or used against you.
- The U.S. Constitution requires a national census once every 10 years for the purposes of reapportioning the U.S. House of Representatives.
- Every person living in the United States must be counted. This includes people of all ages, races, ethnic groups, citizens and noncitizens.
- More than 130 million addresses across the nation will receive a Census form in February and March 2010. Households should complete and mail back their forms upon receipt.
- Census workers will visit households that do not return forms to take a count in person.
- Census workers can be identified by a census badge and bag.

### Key Census Dates:

- February – March 2010 - Census questionnaires are mailed or delivered to households.
- April 1, 2010 - Census Day
- May – July 2010 - Census takers visit households that did not return a questionnaire by mail.
- December 2010 - By law, Census Bureau delivers population counts to the President for apportionment.
- March 2011 - By law, Census Bureau completes delivery of redistricting data to states.

For more information on the Census in your area contact the appropriate Census Representative below:



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