



SPICEWOOD VFD-EMS, INC.
PO BOX 2
SPICEWOOD, TX. 78669



Texas Rural Communities, Inc.
Attn: Sandra Tenorio
168 Cimarron Park Loop
Buda, TX 78610

Spicewood Volunteer Fire Department / EMS, Inc.
P.O. Box 2
Spicewood, TX 78669
February 3, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

Enclosed please find an application from the Spicewood Volunteer Fire Department / EMS for a Rural Communities Recognition grant in the amount of \$2,298 to support its effort to start-up a high school equivalency program (GED) for Spicewood firefighters who do not yet have a high school diploma, and for similarly situated members of the Spicewood community-at-large.

The TRC grant would allow the Spicewood Volunteer Fire Department to increase the number of firefighters certified as EMS/EMT providers. This program would help firefighters without high school diplomas earn their GEDs, thereby meeting the minimum eligibility requirements for EMS / EMT training programs. The Spicewood community also has a significant number of young adults who have not completed high school – and whom we hope to reach with this program. In this first year we would hope to provide GED tutorial services that would allow at least 10 individuals to secure their GED. Once established, we hope to continue the program in follow-on years through local resources.

The department would use grant funds to purchase diagnostic and instruction materials for all participants and to cover the cost of their GED testing.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Bay-Borelli
1st Vice-President, SVFD

**Texas Rural Communities, Inc. - Grant Application
Spicewood Volunteer Fire Department / EMS, Inc.**

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Spicewood Volunteer Fire Department / EMS seeks a Rural Communities Recognition grant to support its effort to start-up a high school equivalency program (GED) for its firefighters who do not yet have a high school diploma, and for similarly situated members of the Spicewood community-at-large.

Our Fire Department serves the rural community of Spicewood, Texas (approximately 30 miles from Austin, and 20 miles from Marble Falls – well outside their jurisdictional boundaries). Spicewood has a population of approximately 5,000 people, nearly 10% (N≈400) without high school diploma. On the other hand approximately 42% (N≈1,700) of its residents have a college degree. Nearly one third of its residents are either unemployed or not in the labor force. The fire department was organized in 1977, and has a current membership of 47 firefighters, but only a small number of certified, active EMS providers.

The Spicewood Volunteer Fire Department needs to increase the number of volunteers certified as EMS/EMT providers. In order to take EMS/EMT classes participants must have a high school diploma. Several of our firefighters interested in becoming EMS / EMT responders do not have diplomas, but have indicated a willingness to get their GEDs. The Spicewood community also has a significant number of young adults who have not completed high school – and whom we hope to reach with this program. In this first year we would hope to provide GED tutorial services that would allow at least 10 individuals to secure their GED. Once established, we hope to continue the program in follow-on years through local resources.

We are fortunate to have two people in the community, an Education professor at UT Austin and a veteran mathematics teacher and public school administrator willing to coordinate the program, and tutor several students, as well. The GED “classes” will be held at the Community Library in Spicewood – initially bringing the group together for guidance and support, but eventually working individually with them on their areas of weakness. The library Board is enthusiastic about the effort, and will be able to provide additional tutors. We hope to have tutors meet 1:1 with each student at least twice per week (at mutually convenient times). Students would be expected to work independently on skills between tutoring sessions.

We have already made contact with existing GED programs in Marble Falls and ACC, and plan to take advantage of their expertise. However, they cannot provide us materials. We hope to use these grant funds to purchase diagnostic and instruction materials for all participants (\$58.20 / student: Steck-Vaughn’s “GED Start-to Finish package”) and to pay the \$95/student fee for GED testing. The total cost per student would be \$153.20 x 15 students = \$2,298 total funds requested.

**Texas Rural Communities, Inc. Grant Application
Spicewood Volunteer Fire Department / EMS, Inc.**

APPLICATION

SECTION I: Contact Information

- a) Name: Michael Bay-Borelli.
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Telephone #: (512) 296-6092
e-mail: mikebayb@gmail.com
- b) Organization Name: Spicewood Volunteer Fire Department / EMS
Address: P.O. Box 2, Spicewood, TX 78669

SECTION II: Organizational Description

- a) The Spicewood Volunteer Fire Department /EMS provides “first-responder” emergency services for the Spicewood community. This includes structural and wildfire response, as well as emergency medical response. The volunteer organization was formed in 1977 with 5 members and one piece of firefighting equipment (and a hearse for an ambulance). Today, the department has approximately 47 members, and remains a fully-volunteer organization (no paid members). It is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization supported in small part by tax dollars from Burnet County (\approx \$23,000/yr), but secures most of its annual operating expenses of nearly \$200,000/yr through fundraising and community donations. The department now has 11 pieces of firefighting equipment and two ambulances. Last year our volunteers responded to \approx 350 emergency calls, the large majority of which were EMS calls.

SECTION III: Program Description

- a) **Needs:** The fire department has a current membership of 47 firefighters, but only a small number of certified, active EMS providers (and all but three are over 60 years of age). In order to meet the volume of EMS calls we receive, the department needs to increase the number of volunteers it has who are certified as EMS/EMT providers. But, in order to take EMS/EMT certification classes, participants must have a high school diploma. Several of our younger firefighters who have expressed an interest in becoming EMS / EMT responders do not have diplomas, but have indicated a willingness to get their GEDs. We have commitments at this time from six (6) FVD volunteers to participate in the program, and secure their GEDs.

The Spicewood community also has a significant number of young adults who have not completed high school. Recent census figures put that number in excess of 400 individuals, some unemployed, many under-employed. Through advertising sponsored by the Fire Department and the Community Library we hope to attract a small percentage of that eligible population to this new GED program – at least 10 community members.

Access to existing GED programs for Spicewood residents is a challenge – we are approximately 30 miles from Austin’s ACC campus and more than 20 miles from the GED program in Marble Falls. We believe a GED program offered locally in the community, taught one-on-one by qualified individuals drawn from the community, and offered at times convenient to the students will be well supported.

- b) **Description:** The GED program will see an initial cohort of approximately 15 students meet with their mentors in a kick-off session (in March, if possible). At this time students will be advised of the program requirements, GED testing structure (diagnostic and performance), and the way in which mentors (tutors) will support their efforts to master the skills required for satisfactory performance on the GED tests. They will also take a placement test (TABE), and be oriented to the Steck-Vaughn GED instruction materials they will use to learn and practice new skills; and have their responsibility for working independently with those materials clearly spelled out.

We are fortunate to have two people in the community, one an Education professor at UT Austin, and the other a veteran mathematics teacher and public school administrator, who are willing to coordinate the program (and tutor several students, as well). They are also both members of the Spicewood Volunteer Fire Department. The president of the Spicewood Community Library has agreed to make the library’s classroom and its computers available to the program, and to join with us in planning and coordinating the program. We have also made contact with existing GED programs in Marble Falls and ACC, and plan to take advantage of their expertise (they can’t give us materials).

Mentors will be drawn from the Spicewood community. Nearly one third of all residents have a college degree, so there will be an ample supply of well-educated potential mentors. We also have a number of retired teachers in the community – many of whom would be excited about the opportunity to help neighbors and friends accomplish such a worthy goal. The Spicewood Community Library has indicated its willingness to not only house the GED program, but to also assist us in our efforts to recruit qualified mentors.

Following the orientation session, mentors will set up tutoring sessions (1:1 support) with their students at times convenient to both. Sessions will be held in the conference room of the Spicewood Community Library. When students (and their mentors) feel they are ready to take any one or more of the GED tests (there are 5 separate tests they must pass), the mentors will help them if necessary with the online GED registration at an authorized testing center (most likely at Round Rock).

Following the initial cohort’s success, as individuals complete their GED requirements, and as mentors remain available, additional community residents needing a high school

diploma and anxious to obtain one through the GED program will be brought into the program. Given that the GED program requirements are changing dramatically effective Jan 3, 2014 (new more challenging standards, and new tests), new diagnostic and instructional materials will be needed for those entering the program later in the cycle. We hope to use the success of the first cohort and the good “press” that will provide to help generate funding within the community for an ongoing GED program. At that time, with some experience under our belt and program credibility, we will also seek state GED program funding.

- c) **Participants:** The Spicewood GED program will initially serve approximately 15 people in the Spicewood community who do not have high school diplomas. While it is expected that the large majority will be young adults, the program will accept any eligible resident of the community who wishes to participate.
- d) **Impact Grant:** We are not requesting Rural Communities funding for an “Impact Grant,” but the program we put in place may well serve as a model for other rural fire departments and communities and prove to be worthy of replication (TBD).
- e) **Budget:** We hope to use these grant funds to purchase diagnostic and instruction materials for all participants (\$58.20 / student: Steck-Vaughn’s “GED Start-to Finish package”) and to pay the \$95/student fee for GED testing. The total cost per student would be \$153.20 x 15 students = \$2,298 total funds requested. While we would appreciate receiving the full amount requested, any portion of the funds requested would be helpful. The department purchased three sets of materials as its 10% match (\$199.93).
- f) **Outcomes:** We expect to provide GED services to no fewer than 15 participants. All 15 participants will complete diagnostic testing. We hope to see at least 12 of them complete their program of instruction (no more than 3 “drop-outs”). We further hope to see at least 10 of them receive a GED as a result of their participation (take and pass all 5 GED tests: Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies).
- g) **Timeline:** We would like to launch the GED program early in March of 2013. Diagnostic testing completed by the end of March 2013 for all participants. Mentoring sessions conducted April through November of 2013, with all GED student testing completed by December of 2013 (before the GED program requirements change – GED qualifying tests taken under the old program will not ‘carry forward’ to the new GED program).
- h) **Prior TRC Grants:** the Spicewood FVD has not received any prior grant awards from TRC.