



**SFY2023-2024 Volunteer Fire Infrastructure & Response Equipment
(V-FIRE) Grant Program:
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)**

*New and/or updated FAQs will be highlighted in red;
Please check the DHSES website frequently for updates*

I. Due Date and Application Instructions

1) Question: What is the application due date for the SFY2023-2024 Volunteer Fire Infrastructure & Response Equipment (V-FIRE) Grant Program?

Answer: Applications are due to the NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services-Grants Program Administration on April 30, 2024, by 5:00pm. Applications that are submitted past this date/time will be disqualified. No extensions will be given.

2) Question: How do I submit my application for the SFY2023-2024 V-FIRE Grant Program?

Answer: Applications must be submitted via the DHSES E-Grants System. Applications that do not address all required sections of the RFA will be disqualified.

3) Question: What are the consequences of not reviewing the E-Grants Tutorial?

Answer: You are strongly encouraged to go through the E-Grants tutorial as it is designed to help you navigate the application process, especially if you are new to the grant process. Any questions concerning E-Grants can be directed to the grants e-mail address at: Grant.Info@dhses.ny.gov.

4) Question: What will happen if I am late to register with E-Grants?

Answer: If you do not register on time with E-Grants you risk missing your overall deadline for the application. You should register as soon as you know that you intend to submit an application, to avoid any issues.

5) Question: I am having trouble submitting my application in E-Grants and/or having problems downloading the appropriate documents that must be submitted as a required attachment with my application (e.g., file incompatibility). How can I receive assistance with this process?

Answer: The E-Grants Tutorial for the SFY2023-2024 V-FIRE Grant Program provides a step-by-step guide for successfully submitting your application via the E-Grants system. The tutorial is available at the following link: <https://www.dhSES.ny.gov/state-funded-programs>.

If you have questions or concerns about E-Grants after reviewing the tutorial, please contact DHSES at Grant.Info@dhSES.ny.gov or 866-837-9133 for assistance.

6) Question: What will happen if I fail to answer all of the required sections of the application?

Answer: Applicants are required to answer all the questions in the application worksheet. Failure to answer all the required questions will lead to a reduction in your score for the section being reviewed and could lead to an unfavorable overall score by the review panel.

7) Question: What are the consequences of requesting budget items that are not allowable?

Answer: If you request budgetary items that are not allowed under the SFY2023-2024 V-FIRE Grant Program, those items will not be considered. Please refer to the SFY2023-2024 V-FIRE Grant Program RFA for more details on permissible and non-permissible costs.

8) Question: What will happen if I submit for more funding than is allowable under the RFA?

Answer: Please ensure your budget does not exceed the funding cap. Requests for raising the funding cap will not be considered.

9) Question: Who should complete the Notice of Endorsement (Exhibit B in the RFA)?

Answer: The Notice of Endorsement should be completed and signed by the County Fire Coordinator or County Emergency Manager. A signed and scanned copy should be included as an attachment to the application. Please note that only County Applications, as explained in *Section II. Eligibility* of the RFA, are required to complete the Notice of Endorsement.

10) Question: When applying on behalf of multiple agencies, does each agency need to complete the Notice of Endorsement?

Answer: Only Counties applying on behalf of their volunteer fire companies are required to complete and submit the Notice of Endorsement. Only one (1) Notice of Endorsement signed by the County Fire Coordinator or County Emergency Manager needs to be completed per County application.

11) Question: Who should complete the Local Volunteer Fire Department Consent Form (Exhibit C in the RFA)?

Answer: Applications being submitted by a County on behalf of their volunteer fire companies, **and** applications being submitted by a Municipal Shared Services

partnership, as explained in the RFA, must include the completed and signed Local Volunteer Fire Department Consent Form as an attachment to their application.

12) Question: Can a volunteer fire department apply for both funding option 1 AND funding option 2?

Answer: The \$25,000,000 available in State funding for this initiative will be divided into two tracks of eligible projects to maximize the benefits of the program funds. Eligible applicants may only select one funding option, as noted in the RFA, for their grant applications.

13) Question: Can a volunteer fire department submit multiple V-FIRE applications? For example, could a department submit an application related to the renovation of their facility as well as submit an application for the purchase of equipment?

Answer: Only one application per eligible entity will be accepted. Additionally, applicants may only select one of the funding options, as noted in the RFA.

14) Question: Should counties and municipalities complete the personnel table on the application worksheet, showing the total number of volunteers, since counties and municipalities typically have paid staff?

Answer: Yes, all sections of the application worksheet should be completed by all applicants, along with any other document required for county and municipal applications. If applying as a County/municipality (submitting agency), the “Number of Volunteer Personnel” in the Personnel Table can equal zero (0), however, please identify the “Number of Volunteer Personnel” for all participating partners being represented in the application.

II. Eligibility and Nonprofit Vendor Prequalification Process

1) Question: Who is eligible to apply for the SFY2023-2024 V-FIRE Grant Program?

Answer: Only eligible organizations that are located within, and serve, the State of New York may apply. Funds will be awarded competitively based on the submission of applications by eligible volunteer fire departments, Counties and Municipal Shared Services that represent the interests of volunteer firefighters. Volunteer fire companies that apply or are represented in a County or Municipal Shared Services application must be comprised of no less than 100% volunteer firefighter membership. To be eligible for award under the V-FIRE Grant Program, all fire departments are required to be current on their National Fire Incident Reporting (NFIRS) through the NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC). Please reference Section II.A. of the RFA for specific eligibility guidance.

2) Question: Who is required to meet the NYS Nonprofit Prequalification requirements?

Answer: All nonprofit organizations are required to be prequalified or prequalified exempt prior to grant application. **Please note that prequalification in the Grants Gateway will transition to the Statewide Financial System (SFS) on January 16, 2024. Information regarding the transition can be found on the following website: <https://grantsmanagement.ny.gov/transition-SFS>.** If you are not currently **prequalified or prequalified exempt** in the Grants Gateway, starting January 16, 2024, you will need to register your organization and complete the prequalification process in SFS. For additional information, please reference the Grants Management website: <https://grantsmanagement.ny.gov/register-your-organization>.

Organizations *incorporated under Not-for-Profit Corporation Law § 1402* are **NOT required to prequalify** but must either do so or provide documentation supporting their exemption for State review and approval in order to (i) apply for grants offered by the State of New York, (ii) enter into a contract with the State, (iii) amend an existing State contract, or (iv) make a purchase with State funds. Information on requesting a prequalification exemption and the necessary forms can be found on the [Grants Management](#) website on the [Get Prequalified](#) page. Applications from volunteer firefighter companies that are not Prequalified and have not applied for and received a prequalification exemption on the application due date listed on the cover of this RFA cannot be evaluated. Such applications will be disqualified from further consideration.

Applicant Type	Do I Need to Prequalify?
Nonprofit incorporated under §1402 of the Not-For-Profit Corporation Law	NO*
Nonprofit not incorporated under §1402 of the Not-For-Profit Corporation Law	YES
Counties (must be representing at least 60% of the volunteer departments in their jurisdiction)	NO
Eligible fire departments/districts that do not have a “nonprofit” status	NO

*This applicant type is NOT required to prequalify but must either do so or provide documentation supporting their exemption for State review and approval.

3) Question: How long does the Prequalification process take?

Answer: The State reserves 7 to 10 days to process applications for prequalification and requests for exemption. We recommend that you submit all such materials sufficiently in advance of the application due date to ensure they will be reviewed and approved in time for your application to be considered.

4) Question: Do I need to submit my application in the NYS Grants Gateway system?

Answer: No, all applications must be submitted via the DHSES E-Grants System as instructed in *Section VI: Application Format and Content* of the Request for Applications (RFA).

- 5) **Question: Our membership is 10 volunteer firefighters and 4+ career staff. Would our eligibility for Volunteer companies being below 100% volunteer manning strength, but now being a combination of volunteers and career eligible to apply for the V-FIRE Grant?**

Answer: With the information you provided, your organization would not be eligible to apply for the SFY2023-2024 V-FIRE Grant Program due to its overall volunteer membership being below the required 100% of total personnel. Please refer to *Section II. A. Eligibility* of the RFA for more details.

- 6) **Question: Is the V-FIRE grant program available to EMS agencies as well?**

Answer: Only fire protection agencies are eligible. Section II of the Request for Applications (RFA) for the Volunteer Fire Infrastructure & Response Equipment (V-FIRE) Grant Program states that this opportunity is limited to:

- Volunteer Fire Companies that are comprised of 100% volunteer firefighters, that are responsible for providing fire protection services to one or more jurisdiction(s).
- Municipalities – Villages, Towns, Cities and Fire Districts responsible for providing fire protection through a fire department comprised of 100% volunteer firefighter membership.
- Counties applying on behalf of local volunteer fire departments that are comprised of 100% volunteer firefighter membership, provided the applying county has a minimum of 60% documented approval from the volunteer fire departments within the county that will directly benefit from the requested project(s).

- 7) **Question: Is the V-FIRE Grant Program only for volunteer fire departments / can career or combination departments apply?**

Answer: The Volunteer Fire Infrastructure & Response Equipment (V-FIRE) Grant program is a competitive funding opportunity, for 100% volunteer fire departments. All agencies with 100% volunteer memberships are encouraged to apply. Applications will be reviewed and scored accordingly. Please refer to the Request For Applications (RFA) and the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) documents, located at www.dhses.ny.gov/state-funded-programs, for all available information regarding eligibility and the evaluation criteria.

- 8) **Question: Our agency is dispatched by our city fire department, and they include our agency when filing their National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) reports. Are we eligible to apply for the V-FIRE Grant Program?**

Answer: Per section 6 of the Request for Applications (RFA) for the V-FIRE Grant Program: To be eligible for award under the V-FIRE Grant Program, all fire departments are required to be current on their National Fire Incident Reporting (NFIRS) through the NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, Office of Fire Prevention and Control (OFPC). If fire reporting for your

organization is covered by another organization, DHSES would need to verify this and confirm that all reporting is current in NFIRS.

III. Municipal Shared Services

1) Question: What qualifies as a municipal shared services partnership?

Answer: For the purposes of this grant program, two or more municipalities may apply jointly for shared projects that will benefit and be accessible to two or more volunteer fire departments. One of the participating partners is required to serve as the “submitting partner” while all other partners will be considered “participating partners.” The submitting partner will be the fiduciary agent for a successful municipal shared services application, responsible for completing all required grant reporting forms in coordination with and on behalf of one or more eligible organizations. *Note:* Eligible entities that are participating as a municipal shared services partnership do not have to be contiguous.

2) Question: If I am part of a municipal shared services application, may my organization apply separately with an individual application?

Answer: For the purposes of this grant program, an eligible organization may submit only one *individual application* and participate as a **participating** partner (not a submitting partner) in one additional *Municipal Shared Services or County application*.

IV. Permissible Costs

1) Question: Can I purchase property under this grant program?

Answer: Yes, the purchase of property is an allowable expense under this grant opportunity.

2) Question: Are construction costs allowable under this grant program?

Answer: Yes, costs associated with construction projects are allowable under this grant opportunity.

3) Question: Would vehicles / apparatus be allowable expenses under this grant program?

Answer: No, the purchase of vehicles or apparatus are not allowable under this grant opportunity.

4) Question: Is response/accountability software allowable under this grant program?

Answer: No, software is not considered an allowable expense under this grant opportunity.

5) Question: Are engineering/architectural expenses to prepare the plans and specifications for construction/renovation projects allowable under this grant program?

Answer: Engineering/architectural work could be considered allowable under a facility project request. Please be sure to provide adequate justification, showing how your project(s) will satisfy the goals and objectives of the Volunteer Fire Infrastructure & Response Equipment (V-FIRE) Grant Program, as listed in Section III (page 6) of the Request for Applications (RFA).

6) Question: Are standby station generators an allowable expense under this grant program?

Answer: Standby station generators could be considered allowable under a facility project request. Please be sure to provide adequate justification, showing how your project(s) will satisfy the goals and objectives of the Volunteer Fire Infrastructure & Response Equipment (V-FIRE) Grant Program, as listed in Section III (page 6) of the Request for Applications (RFA).

7) Question: Are Jaws of Life/extrication equipment allowable under this grant program?

Answer: This type of project could be considered allowable under the program. Please be sure to provide adequate justification, showing how your project will satisfy the goals and objectives of the Volunteer Fire Infrastructure & Response Equipment (V-FIRE) Grant Program, as listed in Section III of the Request for Applications (RFA).

8) Question: If an applicant pays for a project up front, could they be reimbursed through this grant, or should they wait on the project until after the grant is awarded?

Answer: As noted in Section XI, page 15 of the V-FIRE Request for Applications (RFA), “the period of performance for contracts supported by Volunteer Fire Infrastructure & Response Equipment Grant Program funds will be three (3) years from the date of the award. The final performance period will be communicated to applicants and/or grantees by DHSES. Although the contract format may vary, the contract will include such standard terms and conditions included in DHSES grant contracts available for review on the DHSES website: <https://www.dhSES.ny.gov/grant-reporting-forms>.”

Please also note that all phases of project implementation, to include the procurement/bidding process, may only occur during the period of performance of the grant.

V. Other

1) Question: If a County or a municipality submits an application on behalf of the local departments in that County or municipality, can a department included on the County/municipality’s application also submit an application of its own?

Answer: A single fire department/district may submit an individual application and be represented on a County or consolidating/municipal shared services application, provided that both applications are requesting funding for different projects.

- 2) **Question: Does an applicant have to determine what the Social Vulnerability Index number is for our application, or is that something DHSES will do based upon our location?**

Answer: The Social Vulnerability Index for all applications will be determined by DHSES staff.

- 3) **Question: I have additional questions that were not addressed in this Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) bulletin. Whom should I contact?**

Answer: Questions should be directed in writing to the following email address: Grant.Info@dhses.ny.gov. This FAQs bulletin will be updated based on questions that are submitted by prospective applicants. Please check the DHSES website (<https://www.dhses.ny.gov/state-funded-programs>) frequently for updates.