

# VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTING AND VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY SERVICES RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION FUND



**Homeland Security  
and Emergency Services**

## EXECUTIVE REPORT | FEBRUARY 1, 2026

**Kathy Hochul**  
Governor

**Terence O'Leary**  
Acting Commissioner

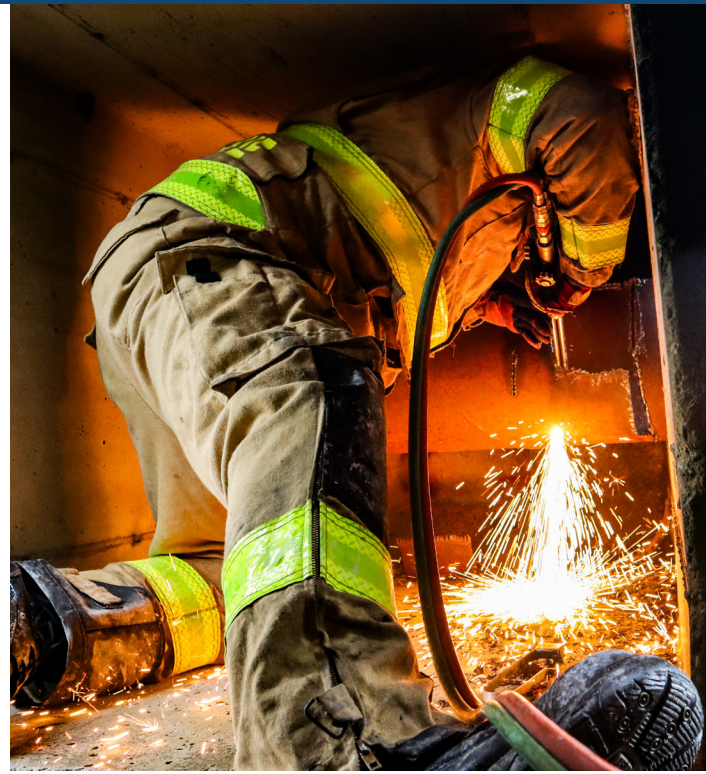
**James B. Cable**  
State Fire Administrator

## Purpose

In recognition of the scope of recruitment and retention challenges and to maximize the benefit of the funding available, the Recruitment and Retention Grant Program seeks to promote new and existing regional recruitment and retention efforts of volunteer firefighters and volunteer emergency services personnel.

## Background

The Volunteer Firefighting and Volunteer Emergency Services Recruitment and Retention Fund (the Fund), the source of funding for the Grant Program, was established in Section 99-q of the State Finance Law in 2009. The law allows personal income tax return filers the option of donating to the Fund. The funds so collected are administered by the State Fire Administrator and the Fund is audited by the State Comptroller's Office. Recruitment and Retention Grant Requests for Applications (RFAs) were released in fiscal years 2012, 2015, 2018 and 2025 utilizing tax monies from the Fund. Between the four cycles of this competitive grant opportunity, \$1,583,626 was awarded to 75 stakeholders throughout New York State.



## Program Objectives:

- Support organizational leadership development through education and training
- Develop and implement recruitment and retention programs and materials

## Recruitment and Retention Grant Program Overview

New York State is served by more than 1,700 volunteer fire and emergency medical service (EMS) organizations protecting communities across the State. There have been four funding cycles for the Recruitment and Retention Grant Program which is designed to support eligible volunteer fire and emergency medical service organizations with enhancing and sustaining their recruitment and retention programs within their served communities. Without the support of these volunteers, fire and EMS response capabilities would be severely impacted throughout New York State.

## Criteria to apply:

- Volunteer Fire Companies and Fire Departments
- Municipalities and Fire Districts, on behalf of volunteer fire and EMS organizations
- Volunteer EMS Organizations
- Nonprofit Statewide Organizations that represent interests of volunteer firefighters/EMS
- All volunteer agencies represented in an application must be comprised of 50% or more of volunteers

## Award Process

The Recruitment and Retention Grant Program is managed by the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Office of Fire Prevention and Control (DHSES-OFPC), with coordination by DHSES Grants Program Administration (DHSES-GPA).





## Spending

From the \$1,007,225 that was awarded over the course of the now closed 2012, 2015, and 2018 grant cycles, an approximate total of \$790,000 was ultimately disbursed among the grantees to enhance their recruitment and retention efforts. The approximate remaining funds of \$216,000 (21%) of the grant award was turned back to the fund.

## Impacts

Past project expenditures have encouraged recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighter and emergency services personnel. Advertising and leadership training were the most commonly budgeted expenses among the stakeholders. Other past allowable awards have included:

- Recruitment signs
- Website/social media development
- Exercise equipment
- Explorer/Youth Career Development Programs
- Leadership development training to include costs associated with attending courses at the National Fire Academy and the New York State Academy of Fire Science
- Department recruitment/retention strategies that include the promotion of health and wellness of new and existing volunteers
- The development of marketing plans, publicity campaigns and community awareness initiatives
- The sponsorship of local community events designed to recruit volunteers
- Newspaper/online publications, promotional mailings and other recruitment-focused advertising
- Promotional merchandise to include brochures and other outreach campaign materials



## Outlook

The SFY2025-2026 cycle of the Recruitment and Retention Grant Program is being implemented, with awards totaling \$576,401 having recently been announced to 31 volunteer fire and EMS organizations. In an effort to expand the program's impact and address emerging health and wellness needs of the volunteer fire community, permissible projects for this round have been expanded to include cancer decontamination supplies, personal protective equipment (PPE), class B uniforms, cancer screening and cardiovascular screening. Currently, the Recruitment and Retention fund has an approximate balance of \$2.25 million. Due to the growth of the Recruitment and Retention fund in recent years, future cycles of the program will be geared towards expanding outreach efforts to attract a greater number of applicants, with the goal of having a more widespread impact on recruitment and retention efforts throughout the state. Efforts to engage more emergency medical services personnel under this grant program will continue, as EMS participation has been limited compared with that of firefighter personnel throughout the three funding cycles thus far.



## SFY2025-2026 Recruitment and Retention Grant Program

**Total Awards: \$576,401**

**Project Period: 1/1/2026 - 12/31/2026**

Awardee	Project Details	Award Amount
Alexandria Bay Joint Fire District	Job Fair Advertising; Various Local Media Advertising; Leadership Training; Explorer Program equipment; Training expenses	\$18,500
Belgium Cold Springs Fire District	Health & Wellness Consultant focusing on physical fitness, nutrition, education and personal development to support the unique needs of first responders	\$25,000
Blooming Grove Volunteer Ambulance Corps, Inc.	Training expenses; Promotional giveaway items; Health & Wellness Equipment; Advertising and Signage	\$7,246
Brockport Fire District	Health & Wellness equipment	\$19,629
Cambria Volunteer Fire Company, Inc.	Class B uniforms; Training-Materials/Equipment- FF1/2 Class Books and Videos	\$20,280
Champlain Fire District	Electronic Sign	\$20,000
Cortlandville Fire District	Health & Wellness Equipment	\$24,473
Eastchester Volunteer Ambulance Corps LLC	Advertising-Variou Media Advertising-Mailers & Brochures; Promotional giveaway Items; Signage, Tents for community events; Health & Wellness equipment	\$14,421
Elsmere Fire District	Cancer Screening; Leadership Training Consultant; Health & Wellness Decontamination Supplies; Training equipment; Advertising-Mailers & Brochures (advertising to recruit bunk-in candidates); Explorer Program-Apparel (Class B uniforms/Job shirts for explorers)	\$19,165
Enfield Fire District	Health & Wellness Consultant; Health & Wellness-Equipment; Mental Health & Wellness (mental health counselors and peer support)	\$25,000
Erie County	Marketing Display Sets, (printed tent, banner, feather flags); County Website design	\$25,000
Farmington Volunteer Fire Association	Health & Wellness Equipment; Leadership Training fees; Firefighting gear/ PPE	\$25,000
Firefighters Association of the State of New York	Recruitment and Retention Package containing training, how-to guides, and information about recruitment, retention, marketing, and leadership for all NYS volunteer departments	\$25,000
Hatzolah EMS, Inc.	Leadership Training Consultant	\$6,000
Highland Falls, Village of	Training Materials/Equipment	\$3,159
Holland Fire Department	Self-Rescue Escape System and Training	\$16,250
Jeffersonville Fire District	PPE and Class B Uniforms for recruits; Recruit physicals	\$23,444
Jonesville Fire Department	Electronic Sign	\$25,000
Kauneonga Lake Fire District	Class B Uniforms	\$8,000
Long Beach, City of	New recruitment banners, tables, chairs, monitor for events	\$7,000
Onondaga Fire Co, Inc.	Electronic Sign	\$25,000
Port Jervis, City of	Health & Wellness Equipment; Decontamination Supplies	\$25,000
Rhinecliff Volunteer Fire Company, Inc.	Recruitment documentary film about firefighter training	\$25,000
Speculator, Village of	Training-Materials/Equipment; Electronic Sign	\$21,100
Spencerport Fire District	Explorer Program-Apparel/Equipment/Materials; Various Media (physical and digital media); Promotional giveaway Items; Leadership Training	\$24,710
Stony Point Fire District	Recruitment & outreach campaign; Community recruitment events; Leadership Development Training; Health & Wellness: Physicals for new recruits; Cancer and cardiovascular screenings for active members	\$25,000
Sullivan County	Mobile Recruitment trailer for Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters	\$25,000
Tarrytown, Village of	Table banner, Promotional giveaway items; Custom tent and a Photo prop	\$1,789
West Carthage Volunteer Fire Department	Health & Wellness Equipment	\$6,160
West Corners Fire District	Health & Wellness Consultant; Class B Uniforms	\$15,075
Wyoming County Emergency Services	Leadership Training Consultant Fees; Advertising-Mailers & Brochures; Promotional giveaway items; Training-Materials/Equipment	\$25,000

**TOTAL \$576,401**