



**Homeland Security
and Emergency Services**

**Fire Prevention
and Control**

A photograph showing the silhouettes of several firefighters in full protective gear, including helmets and oxygen tanks. They are positioned in front of a bright, intense fire, which creates a strong backlighting effect. The scene is dark, with the fire providing the primary light source.

Volunteer Firefighting and Volunteer Emergency Services Recruitment and Retention Fund:

E X E C U T I V E R E P O R T

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Jackie Bray
Commissioner

Kathy Hochul
Governor

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 Firefighter 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 and 2018 utilizing tax monies from the Fund. Between the three cycles of this competitive grant opportunity, \$1,007,225 was awarded to 44 unique stakeholders throughout New York State.



Program Objectives:

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

Eligibility/Criteria to Apply:

- Volunteer Fire Companies and Fire Departments (comprised of $\geq 50\%$ volunteers)
- Municipalities and Fire Departments, on behalf of organizations that are comprised of $\geq 50\%$ volunteers
- Volunteer EMS Organizations (comprised of $\geq 50\%$ volunteers)
- Statewide Organizations (must be non-profits that represent interests of volunteer firefighters/EMS)

Allowable Costs:

In support of the Program Objectives, the following list identifies some examples of allowable costs for the Recruitment and Retention Grant Program:

- 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
- Adoption of Explorer Post Programs or other worksite-based career education programs





Recruitment and Retention Grant Program Overview

New York State consists of more than 1,700 volunteer fire and emergency medical service (EMS) organizations that serve the nearly 20 million residents across the state. There have been three 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.

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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. Additionally, the Department of Health – Bureau of Emergency Medical Services (DOH-BEMS) served in an advisory capacity as subject matter experts and representatives of the EMS community in the planning and review phase of the program.

Spending

From the \$1,007,225 that was awarded over the course of the 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 remaining \$216,000 (21%) of the grant award was turned back to the fund.

Impacts

A review of project expenditures shows an emphasis on both recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighter and emergency services personnel. Advertising and leadership training were the most commonly budgeted expenses among the stakeholders. Other expenditures included recruitment signs, website/social media development, exercise equipment and Explorer/Youth Career Development Programs. .

Outlook

A new cycle of the Recruitment and Retention Grant Program is being drafted. Currently, the Recruitment and Retention fund has an approximate balance of \$1.3M. Due to the growth of the Recruitment and Retention fund in recent years, emphasis 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. DHSES-OFPC along with the support of DHSES-GPA, will continue to collaborate with DOH-BEMS and will leverage existing list-serves from other DHSES managed programs to expand the reach of this important grant program. Additionally, in an effort to alleviate some questions surrounding allowable projects, a new emphasis is being placed on guiding applicants to consider options for “encouraged and preferred” projects, based on project data that has been collected over the past three funding cycles.

