##### 

##### ***Synopsis of the 2023/24 Volunteer Infrastructure and Response Equipment Grant Program***

*January 2024, Courtesy of the Capital Area Fire Districts Association*

* Volunteer Fire Infrastructure & Response Equipment (V-FIRE) Grant Program has been issued by the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services
* The purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA) is to solicit eligible applications for up to $1,000,000 in funding to support construction, renovation, or purchase costs of critical facilities (buildings, training facilities, etc.) that support fire operations, or up to $500,000 in funding to support the purchase of allowable fire service equipment to upgrade and improve their facilities and response capabilities. Funds will be awarded competitively, based on the review of applications submitted.
* Eligible applicants may only select ONE of the following options for their grant applications:
  + **Construction/Renovation/Facility Purchase Projects**: A total of $20,000,000 in program funds will be devoted to support Construction/Renovation/Facility Purchase projects and is available to all eligible applicants. The funding amount per application may not exceed $1,000,000 in projects requested under Funding Option 1.
  + **Equipment Projects**: A total of $5,000,000 in program funds will be devoted to support allowable fire service equipment projects and is available to all eligible applicants. The funding amount per application may not exceed $500,000 in projects requested under Funding Option 2.
* Should an eligible applicant submit for multiple projects within an application under one of the above funding options, they are highly encouraged to prioritize their projects with the most pressing needs and most significant capability gaps.
* Only eligible entities that are located within the State of New York and serve one or more local governments may apply.
* Municipalities – Villages, Towns, Cities and **Fire Districts** responsible for providing fire protection through a fire department comprised of 100% volunteer firefighter membership.
* All nonprofit organizations (fire companies & fire protection districts) are required to be prequalified or prequalified exempt prior to grant application.
* 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.
  + The State reserves 7 to 10 days to process applications for prequalification and requests for exemption.
* Funding Option 2:
  + Purchase of Allowable Equipment – With an increased awareness on the health and safety of firefighters, as well as new policies and regulations, agencies may find it difficult to continue investing in the latest equipment to keep first responders protected from the dangers of the field.
    - ▪ Permissible items include, but are not limited to:
    - • Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including SCBA
    - • PPE washer/extractor
    - • PPE dryers
    - • Radios and communications equipment
    - • Firefighter rehabilitation equipment
    - • SCBA fill station and testing equipment
* Costs Not Permissible
  + Costs incurred prior to award; including grant writer fees.
  + Organizational, management and administrative costs
  + Payment for costs fully covered by a grant award or legislative member item
  + Supplanting or replacing funding for costs budgeted, allocated or expended for an existing project.
  + Grant funds may not be used to support loan payments, to include the Emergency Services Revolving Loan (ESRL) Program
* Once an award has been made, any amendment or alteration of the program or initiative to be funded is subject to approval by the Commissioner.
* Format: Grant applications MUST be submitted via the automated E-Grants System operated by DHSES.
* If you have not previously been registered to use the DHSES E-Grants system, your agency will need to register and be assigned a username and password. The Registration Request Form and a detailed tutorial on how to use the E-Grants system is available at: <https://www.dhses.ny.gov/e-grants>.
* You must answer these grant specific questions in the required Application Worksheet.
* Failure to answer all the required questions could lead to a reduction in your score for the section being reviewed and could lead to an unfavorable overall score by the review panel. Please refer to Exhibit A for some best practices and tips on preparing an effective grant application.
* The following must be addressed in your application:
  + Organization Name and Identifying/Contact Information:
  + Description of Organization or Partnership: Please provide or describe the following:
    - • Location within New York State, to include all station locations;
    - • Number of square miles covered;
    - • Population of region covered;
    - • Annual operating budget;
    - • Average annual call volume *for last three years (2020-2022*)
* Affirmation of (NFIRS) Fire Reporting, must be current on reporting
* Please identify the number of personnel, to include number of active interior and exterior firefighters, within the organization
* Historical Description of Organization
  + Please provide a brief history of the organization or municipal shared services partnership. Describe how the organization or partnership represents the interests of volunteer fire personnel. Also include a description of the types of incidents your agency responds to, the type and age of the current station(s) and fire equipment in service, identify your response district (rural, urban or suburban), as well as some details of the environment protected.
  + Please prioritize each project within your budget
  + Finally, please provide the Total Cost for each project
* Please describe how each project will support the program objectives of the SFY2023-2024 V-FIRE Grant Program and enhance your organization's or consolidating/municipal shared services partnership's capabilities.
* Please describe how your organization or municipal shared services partnership will implement and sustain this project, to include an estimated timeline of the project implementation, consistent with the three-year spend down time frame of this grant funding.
* The Notice of Endorsement is required for county applications only
* The signed contract agreement with the town or village they are covering is required for Volunteer Fire Companies (for fire protection districts contracting with a municipality)
* Under the SFY2023-2024 V-FIRE Grant Program, applicants will receive up to ten (10) points based on their “Overall Assessment of Application.” This score will be determined by the reviewers based on a complete assessment of the application. Reviewers will assess how well the application addresses the primary objectives of the SFY2023-2024 V-FIRE Grant Program. It is important to clearly articulate the purpose for the request for funding and how it relates to enhancing your agency’s overall capabilities.
* DHSES will add additional points to the scores of agencies that are located in historically underserved or disadvantaged communities.
* Bonus points may be awarded by the review panel based upon the criteria identified below
  + County Applications
  + Consolidation / Municipal Shared Services
  + Rural Area Designation
    - a population of less than 50,000 people that has not been designated in the most recent decennial census as an “urbanized area” by the Secretary of Commerce
* The following multi-tiered criteria will be used by DHSES to evaluate each application
  + Tier 1 criteria are rated either “yes” or “no” and serve as a baseline review by DHSES
  + Applications meeting the Tier 1 review set forth above will be evaluated competitively using the criteria specified in the RFA document.
* Checklist of Required Documents
  + Application Worksheet
  + For County Applications Only: Notice of Endorsement
  + For County and Municipal Shared Services Applications: Local Volunteer Fire Department Consent
  + For Volunteer Fire Company Applications: A copy of the signed contract agreement with the town or village you are covering
* DHSES must receive completed grant applications by April 30, 2024, by 5:00 p.m.
* The period of performance for contracts supported by Volunteer Fire Infrastructure & Response Equipment Grant Program funds will be three (3) yearsfrom the date of the award.
* This RFA is issued by DHSES, which is responsible for the requirements specified herein and for the evaluation of all applications.
* Grant applications must be submitted via the automated DHSES E-Grants System.
  + If, upon reading this RFA, you are interested in completing a grant application and you have not previously been registered to use the DHSES E-Grants system, your agency will need to register and be assigned a username and password
* A detailed tutorial on how to use the E-Grants system can be found with the application documents at the following location: <https://www.dhses.ny.gov/state-funded-programs>
* Any resulting contract or agreement for more than $50,000 from this RFA will be effective only *upon approval by both the NYS Office of the Attorney General and State Comptroller*. (sure to take time!)
* **\*\* TAKE NOTE!:** **Standard Cost *Reimbursement* Contract**
  + **Each successful applicant must enter into a standard cost reimbursement contract with DHSES. [*you have to advance the money and then be reimbursed*!]**
    - Such contract will include this Request for Applications, the successful applicant’s proposal, any attachments or exhibits and the standard clauses required by the NYS Attorney General for all State contracts
    - The contract will be subject to approval by the Attorney General and State Comptroller.
    - …the contract will include such clauses, information, and rights and responsibilities as can be found on the DHSES website, including the following:
      * APPENDIX A-1 - Agency Specific Clauses or a Letter of Agreement (Depending upon Funding Amount)
      * APPENDIX B - Budget
      * APPENDIX C - Payment and Reporting Schedule
      * APPENDIX D - Workplan/Special Conditions
    - Payments will be made subject to proper documentation and ***compliance with reimbursement procedures*** and all other contractual requirements.
* Applicants (*project bidders*) must follow and comply with all procurement procedures under General Municipal Law 5A and/or any other state regulations applicable to these funds and will be subject to monitoring by DHSES to ensure compliance
* By submitting this application, Applicants (*project bidders*) are certifying that Applicant has a policy addressing sexual harassment prevention and that applicant provides sexual harassment training to all its employees on an annual basis that meets the Department of Labor’s model policy and training standards.
* bidders/proposers for this contract for commodities, services or technology are strongly encouraged and expected to consider Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprises (SDVOBs) in the fulfillment of the requirements of the contract.
* By submitting this application, Applicants (*project bidders*) are certifying that Applicant has workers’ compensation and disability coverage.
* In reference to the Iran Divestment Act, by submitting a proposal in response to this RFA, or by assuming the responsibility of a Contract awarded hereunder, the applicant (or any assignee) certifies that once the prohibited entities list is posted on the OGS website, it will not utilize on such Contract any subcontractor that is identified on the prohibited entities list.
* **Vendor Responsibility**: DHSES requires that vendors file the required Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire online via the New York State VendRep System.
* **Satisfactory Progress**: Satisfactory progress toward implementation includes but is not limited to; executing contracts and submitting payment requests in a timely fashion, retaining consultants, completing plans, designs, reports, or other tasks identified in the work program within the time allocated for their completion.
* Any not-for-profit subrecipients are required to be prequalified, prior to contract execution, by the State of New York upon application submission through the New York State Grants Gateway (<https://grantsgateway.ny.gov>)
* **Records** – Applicants/subrecipients must keep books, ledgers, receipts, work records, consultant agreements and inventory records pertinent to the project; and in a manner consistent with DHSES contractual provisions and mandated guidelines.
* **Reports** - A provider agency shall submit to the DHSES reports in a format and time schedule specified in the grant contract, which shall include a description of the program efforts undertaken during the report period and the current status of the project.
* **Special Conditions**
  + *Participation in, and successful completion of, the New York State Emergency Management Certification and Training Program (EMC Training Program)* ***is a mandatory requirement under this Contract and a condition of funding.***
  + ***Copies of the training certificates for each required participant must be submitted*** *to DHSES upon execution of the Contract, or, in the event that training is scheduled, but not yet complete, the applicant will be required to submit a signed statement indicating the scheduled future dates of attendance, and no later than thirty (30) days after the training is complete, forward such training certificates to DHSES.*
  + ***Applicants must commit to active participation in a DHSES Annual Capabilities Assessment as a condition of funding***
  + ***Funded applicants agree to attend and participate in any DHSES-sponsored conferences, training, workshops or meetings (excluding those identified by DHSES as voluntary) that may be conducted, by and at the request of DHSES, during the life of the grant contract.***