



Subject	SRS VFD Radio Grant - Request for Your Application
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Your department is invited to apply for the VFD Radio grant. This grant is intended to supply volunteer fire departments with radio equipment to facilitate communication with state agencies.

- **NOTE:** While we would like to supply all 472 Nebraska VFDs with SRS Radio Kits, that will not be possible during the 2024/2025 budget year due to time and budget constraints. Instead, we will be using a selection process for all applications received by 8/16/24. We estimate 65 to 75 SRS Radio Kits will be awarded for 2024/2025. Applicants will be notified by 9/2/24, if selected to receive an SRS Radio Kit.

Grant equipment will include one SRS Radio Kit (with two radios):	
	<p>Tri-band portable radio programmed for the SRS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VHF,7/800MHz Enabled • AES Encryption with Over the Air Rekeying (OTAR) • Over the Air Programming (OTAP) • Desk charger • Two batteries
	<p>Mobile radio connected to Vehicle Range Extender (VRX)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extends range for portables on the SRS • AES Encryption with Over the Air Rekeying (OTAR) • Over the Air Programming (OTAP) <p>Mobile equipment will be mounted in a case with an antenna and vehicular power cord. This will allow use in any vehicle as necessary.</p>

Project Objective:

The two main goals of the VFD Radio grant are:

1. Establish interoperable communication between state agencies and volunteer departments by providing portable and mobile radios, programming, and installation of radio equipment.
2. Train volunteer departments that receive the radio equipment through the grant. Training will include subscriber and repeater operation and interoperability use on the Statewide Radio System (SRS).

Benefits:

- Communication interoperability between state agencies and volunteer departments.
 - Providing volunteer fire departments direct communication with State Patrol, State Fire Marshal, NDOT, and other agencies for coordination of activities.

- Allowing volunteer fire departments to talk directly to the many other Federal, Tribal, State, and local entities that are on the SRS.
- Access to the SRS ROC, Event, and other interoperability talk groups, available to all SRS users and dispatch centers within the state.
- Grant funding to cover equipment, training, programming, installation, and subscription costs.
 - The grant will cover equipment, training and 3-year warranty. SRS fees will be covered for the grant equipment. After warranty the Departments will be responsible for repair and maintenance. Programming and firmware updates will be provided and scheduled by the OCIO. Updates may require a connection to a programming device at any NSP troop area headquarters.
 - Consumable items (i.e., batteries, etc.) will not be covered by the grant beyond what is initially received.
- No longer needing to relay communications through a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP / dispatch center).
 - Saves time by communicating directly with State agency or other SRS users.
 - Increases communications accuracy by communicating directly instead of a dispatch relay.

Grant qualifications:

- Must be a state-recognized volunteer fire department.
- Must be willing to commit to *monthly testing*, both from the department and dispatch center.
 - Monthly testing consists of powering on the SRS Radio Kit and talking to the local dispatch center.

What you'll need to do:

- By 8/16/24, you must fully complete and submit the VFD Radio Grant application form.
 - Use this link to access the form: <https://vfdradiogrant.nebraska.gov/>
- If selected to receive equipment, you must attend a training session with SRS to receive equipment.
- After receiving equipment, you must complete monthly testing.

Please carefully consider your selections during the application process, as once the order is placed for the equipment, changes cannot be made.

What to expect:

Process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After submitting the application form: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 8/16/24 – VFD application submission deadline. 2. 9/2/24 – OCIO to notify grantees of determination. 3. Develop programming template for radios. 4. 3/31/25 – ETA for initial equipment order from vendor 5. TBD (<i>dependent on equipment delivery</i>) - Publish training dates for VFDs and schedule installation.

Process

6. Program SRS Radio Kits and configure equipment.
7. Add radios to system.
8. Deliver equipment during training sessions.
9. Grantee's monthly test participation is expected from this point forward.

Criteria for VFD Radio Award:

Due to the limited number of SRS Radio Kits, the following criteria will be used to help determine which VFDs will be awarded equipment through the SRS VFD Radio Grant. SRS is using the State Fire Marshal (SFM) list of VFDs and other data to help validate the applicants' eligibility for the grant. If a VFD should find they aren't listed on the SFM VFD list, they will need to address this with SFM.

1. **Need:** VFDs in need of radios are prioritized for receiving equipment. "Need" is defined as VFDs that do not currently have interoperability with State of Nebraska agencies or have limited interoperability due to frequency band or other factors. The need for interoperability with state agencies is to be provided by the applicant.
2. **Size:** VFDs will be prioritized for awards based on size. "Size" is defined as the First Due Population served by the VFD.

Selection Process:

FY2025 selection for awardees will follow the process below.

The legislature has provided an additional \$2 million for FY2025 to further fund the VFD radio kit distribution throughout the state. This has enabled the purchase of 65 to 75 radio kits as part of the program.

Before selection begins, twelve (12) radio kits will automatically be awarded to the 12 VFDs that completed an application for FY2024 but did not receive a radio kit. (These are: Hoskins, Kilgore, Meadow Grove, Milligan, Mitchell, Plainview, Ravenna, Scribner, Sterling, Tecumseh, Wolbach, and Yutan VFDs.)

Of the remaining FY2025 radio kits, preference will be given to FY2025 applicants that were not previously awarded in FY2024.

For radio kit distribution beyond the above conditions, the same selection process used in FY2024 will apply:

1. Applicants will be divided into 4 groups according to First Due Population size by finding the median and then the median of each of those halves.
2. 25% of SRS Radio Kits will be allocated to each group determined by the First Due Population in the previous step.
 1. Percentage of VFD applicants will be determined from each of the six NSP troop areas.
 2. SRS Radio Kits will be allocated to each NSP troop area as determined by the percentage of applications from each troop area.

3. A random selection of departments will then be held utilizing the above distribution method.

Communications:

- For additional details and updates please visit: <https://cio.nebraska.gov/network-serv/publicsafety/index.html> and locate the “State of Nebraska Volunteer Fire Departments – Radio Grant Information” button on the page or utilize the QR code below.



- Information will be disseminated through the Nebraska State Volunteer Firefighter Association (NSVFA) and SRS System Users Group.
- Email questions to:

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