

**Title:** Solicitation of Interest, Empire Pandemic Response Reimbursement Fund

**Agency:** Children & Family Services, New York State Office of

**Reimbursement Period:** Eligible Expenses that occurred between 3/1/2020 – Date of application

**Date of Issue:** April 16, 2021, Amended May 6, 2021, Amended May 17, 2021

**Online Application Due Date/Time:** Applications accepted until ~~June 15~~, May 18, 2021, by 5:00 p.m., Eastern Time

**Deadline to Request a paper application:** May 7, 2021, 4:30 PM

**Paper Application Due Date/Time:** Applications accepted until ~~June 15~~, May 27, 2021, by 5:00 p.m., Eastern Time

**Location:** Statewide

**Counties:** All New York State Counties

### **Background**

Through the generous support of private donations to New York State's COVID-19 relief effort, OCFS is accepting applications for reimbursement available to offset direct expenses related to COVID-19 incurred by the brave first responders, health care, and many multi-industry workers who provided relief and essential services to New York State residents during the height of the pandemic.

This is a non-competitive application. Applicants who meet the eligibility criteria set forth below and submit the required supporting documentation for income and eligible expense information will be awarded funds to reimburse eligible out-of-pocket expenses incurred while responding to COVID-19 in New York State. Awards will be made to eligible applicants for eligible expenditures on a first-come, first-served basis for correctly completed applications until all funding is distributed. The maximum reimbursement amount is \$1,000 per household.

Unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses incurred and paid during the period of March 1, 2020, through date of application submission are eligible for reimbursement as explained below. OCFS will contract with a not-for-profit, which will review applications and award funding to successful applicants.

If additional funds are available after all applications are received, OCFS reserves the right to issue additional awards or another application opportunity. In addition, OCFS reserves the right to adjust application due dates and the amount of funding set aside for paper and online applications to maximize distribution of awards to qualified applicants.

### **Reimbursement Opportunities**

## Online Applications

OCFS will put forward \$13,248,415 to be distributed to applicants who are first responders and \$10,674,692 for health care workers and essential workers as described below. Applications are available in English and Spanish.

Awards will be made to eligible applicants who submit a complete application for eligible expenditures on a first-come, first-served basis until funding is exhausted.

The maximum reimbursement amount is \$1,000 per household (**see household definition below**). If there is more than one (1) household member who meets the eligibility requirements listed below, the eligible household applicants must include all required documentation and submit one combined application as instructed in this document. However, the maximum amount of reimbursement available is \$1,000 per household regardless of the number of eligible applicants.

## Paper Applications

Because some applicants may not have access to a computer or mobile phone, a paper application will also be available in English and Spanish. \$1,472,046 will be set aside to be distributed to workers meeting the definition of first responders and \$1,186,077 will be set aside for health care workers and essential workers as described below, using a paper application process.

Awards will be made to eligible applicants who submit a complete application on a first-come, first-served basis determined by date of receipt by mail until funding is exhausted. The maximum reimbursement amount is \$1,000 per household (**see household definition below**). If there is more than one (1) household member who meets the eligibility requirements listed below, the eligible household applicants must include all required documentation and submit one combined application as instructed in this document. However, the maximum amount of reimbursement available is \$1,000 per household regardless of the number of eligible applicants.

## Definitions for this Reimbursement Opportunity

**First Responders:** includes only police (law enforcement), fire fighter, EMT, EMS ambulance and armed service workers employed by an essential business listed at <https://esd.ny.gov/guidance-executive-order-2026> under Executive Order 202.6.

**Health Care Workers and Essential Workers:** includes workers, other than first responders employed by an essential business listed at <https://esd.ny.gov/guidance-executive-order-2026> under Executive Order 202.6.

**Household:** includes the applicant and/or one or more people living in the same household who are related to the applicant by birth, marriage or adoption during the period March 1, 2020, through date of application submission. Relatives who are *not dependents* (such as aunts, uncles, parents, grandparents, children that are not dependents and applicant siblings) are *not* to be included. **For your calculation of income eligibility, the number of people in your applicant household should match the number of people, including dependents and spouse filing jointly, listed on your uploaded income tax form(s).**

**For spouses filing separately:** If the applicant lives with their spouse who files a separate tax return, both tax filers and all the dependents listed on both returns are considered the “household.”

**Household Income:** You are eligible if your 2019 or 2020 annual household adjusted gross income (see definition of household above) is at or below the amount indicated for the number of people residing in the household as defined in the chart below. **Do not include income of household members reported as dependents on your income tax form. Make sure to include the income of a spouse who lived with you that tax year, whether filing a tax return jointly or separately.**

### Applicant Eligibility Requirements

**To be eligible for funding, applicants must:**

1. meet the grant opportunity definition of first responder, health care worker or essential worker (as defined above);
2. be employed in this position in New York State sometime during the period of March 1, 2020, through the application submission date; the applicant does not have to currently be employed in this job; and
3. have documented 2019 or 2020 household adjusted gross income at or below 500% of the poverty level for the number of family members residing in the household, as indicated below; and

<b>Applicant Household Adjusted Gross Income Eligibility Chart – You are eligible if your annual household adjusted gross Income (see definition of household above) is at or below the amount indicated for the number of people residing in the household as defined in the chart below. Do not include income of household members reported as dependents on your income tax form. Make sure to include the income of a spouse who lived with you that tax year, whether filing a tax return jointly or separately.</b>	
<b>Number of Household Members (minors and adults)</b>	<b>Adjusted Gross Income Level</b>
1	\$62,240
2	\$79,385
3	\$95,575
4	\$125,470
5	\$148,570
6	\$168,090
7	\$190,865
8	\$213,420
9	\$235,520
10	\$257,620

4. provide documentation, when available, for unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses that resulted from COVID-19 response efforts and are included on the list of eligible expenses

below; such documentation could include receipts for eligible expenses paid (for example: a hotel receipt that was paid and includes the hotel name and location, dates of stay and amount paid; receipts for gas and other eligible out-of-pocket expenses; or a statement from a day care provider, including dates of service and charges.

### **Unreimbursed Out-of-Pocket Expenses Eligible for Reimbursement**

Unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses are costs that you paid out of your household income that have not been reimbursed by any other source and as explained below.

The following unreimbursed expenses, incurred and paid during the period of March 1, 2020, through application submission date are eligible for reimbursement:

1. Childcare/dependent care expenses should be for a child or other family member for whom the applicant is responsible for paying this expense. Eligible expenses are those incurred to perform your employment as a first responder, healthcare worker or essential worker (except for those expenses that have been partially paid for with other federal, state or local fund sources).
2. Lodging expenses: Eligible expenses include temporary housing costs (hotels and motels) incurred by the applicant that allowed them to do their essential work and COVID-19 response activities in New York State. Food and other incidental charges are not covered by this award.
3. Transportation expenses: Flight, gas, public transportation, taxi/vehicle for hire and vehicle rental costs incurred by the applicant that allowed them to do their essential work and COVID-19 response activities in New York State.
4. Personal protective equipment (PPE) expenses needed to do COVID-19 response work (including gloves, masks, gowns, hand sanitizer, face shields, goggles).
5. Burial costs incurred because of a COVID-19-related death in the household. Expenses might include funeral home or related business services for memorial/funeral expenses, burial costs or a grave marker. Exclude all expenses that were, or could be, reimbursed by any other funding source, including burial expenses that were partially reimbursed by other state, federal or local fund sources.
6. Any portion of medical costs, including mental health/counseling costs for household members, that were not covered by insurance and that resulted from COVID-19 response efforts.

### **Application Documentation Submission Requirements**

Applicants who meet the eligibility requirements and worked in New York State during the relevant period must submit an application to OCFS along with the following supporting documentation:

- **Proof of Income Eligibility** – Submit the documents required for one of the two following options (see note for spouses filing taxes separately):

1. Copy of first two pages of 2019 1040 tax form or IRS transcript available at <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/get-transcript>

**OR**

2. Copy of first two pages of 2020 1040 tax form or IRS transcript available at <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/get-transcript>

**Important note for spouses filing taxes separately:** If you and your spouse live in the same household but filed taxes separately, you **must** submit both of your 1040 tax forms. Applicant and spouse tax forms **must** be for the same tax year.

**Unreimbursed Expense Documentation for Submission, when available:**

1. Burial/Funeral Expenses - submit dated funeral home receipts or receipts with the business name documenting memorial/funeral and burial costs or grave marker charges.
2. Medical Expenses - documentation for medical costs is limited to the information on a billing statement (should include only date of service, amount paid by applicant, and provider name). Do not include any diagnosis codes.
3. Childcare/Dependent Care Expenses - submit invoices, payment receipts, or a detailed letter from the care provider with dates of service and charges.
4. Lodging Expenses - submit receipt(s) from the lodging provider (hotel/motel, online rentals) showing name and location of the business, amount paid and dates of stay. If the bill shows food or other incidental charges, do not include this amount in your reimbursement request.
5. Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) Expenses – documentation could include receipts with the business name, the date of sale, and the itemized purchases and charges.
6. Transportation Expenses – Documentation such as receipt(s) showing the business name, the date of sale, charges and what type of transportation was purchased.

**Required Application Attestations:** For an application to be considered for funding, all attestation boxes in the application sections must be checked and all attestations must be signed by the applicant using their legal name and include the date of signature as well as printed legal name of the applicant.

**By signing below:**

- I certify the accuracy of the essential worker employment position information that I have provided.
- I certify that I have been employed in at least one job that qualifies me as a COVID-19 essential worker as defined in Executive Order 202.6 during the application period of March 1, 2020, through my application submission date.
- I certify the accuracy of the household income eligibility information that I have provided.

- I certify that my documented 2019 or 2020 household income is at or below 500% of the poverty level for the number of family members residing in my household as documented in my 2019/2020 tax return.
- I certify that I have included ALL expenses I am seeking reimbursement for; I understand only one application is allowed per household.
- I certify that, regardless of my expense amounts, my award amount cannot exceed \$1,000 for my household.
- I certify that I have provided accurate information on expenses noted in this application.
- I certify that all expenses reported are for eligible expenses as described in this application.
- I certify that all expenses reported were paid out of household funds between March 1, 2020, through the date of this application.
- I certify that all expenses reported were related to COVID-19 response employment activities or other requirements as stipulated in this application.
- I certify that I excluded all expenses other than medical that were, or could be, reimbursed by any other funding source including childcare and burial expenses that were partially reimbursed by other state or federal or local fund sources.
- I certify that I have submitted with this application all available receipts to document the expenses included in this application.
- I certify that all expenses claimed that I have not provided a receipt for are eligible for reimbursement under this fund and are related to my COVID-19 response employment.
- I certify that additional qualifying documentation for eligible expenses must be submitted to New York State upon request.
- I certify that I will receive notification when my award is available from HyperWallet (PayPal). (Note: for online applications and if electronic transfer is chosen by paper applicants.)
- I certify that upon receiving notification from HyperWallet, I am required to log into the secure site and select my form of payment from the options provided. (Note: For online applications and if electronic transfer is chosen by paper applicants.)
- I certify that I will be required to provide additional personal information to complete the transfer of my award funds to my chosen form of payment. (Note: For online applications and if electronic transfer is chosen by paper applicants.)
- I understand and agree that if I am awarded funding, my award notification and paper check will be mailed together to the address I indicated above. (Note: For paper applicants.)
- I certify that I have double-checked all information provided in this application for accuracy and clarity.
- I understand and agree that, regardless of my eligibility, the reimbursement amount awarded is contingent on the availability of funds to support it.
- I understand and agree that completion of this application does not guarantee funding will be awarded to me.
- I understand and agree that if my application is rejected due to ineligibility, inaccurate, conflicting and/or missing information or documentation, I will be notified via email (for online applications; postal mail for paper applications).
- I certify that I am the sole applicant representing my household and that no other member of my household has applied or will apply for this fund.
- I certify that each applicant is allowed only ONE (1) account and application for this award in the application portal (for online applications).
- I understand and agree that this entire application is subject to claim review by New York State.
- I understand and agree that I will not receive an award payment until the claim review process is completed and approved.

- I understand and agree that I may be expected to provide documentation to verify any and all information I provided in this application.
- I understand and agree that this is a reimbursement process; therefore, receipts for eligible expenses must be submitted to New York State upon request.
- By typing (printing for paper applicants) my full name and signing below, I attest that I am the applicant for this award and I certify that the information provided in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and that I have not withheld relevant information.

### **Online Application Submission Requirements**

1. All eligible applicants in a household (**see definition of household above**) must complete and submit one combined application.
2. Accurately complete all required fields of the application.
3. Upload all required supporting documentation. File size must be less than 1MB per file.
4. PDF or Word documents are required. Scanning and converting to PDF instructions are available [here](#). You can also cut and paste pictures of documents into Word documents. If you can't submit a PDF or Word document, request a paper application.
5. Sign and date the application and attestations (including printed name where required).
6. Submit the application no later than the online application due date and time.

The online application is available [here](#):

### **Important Online Application Notes:**

- To be considered for an award, applications must include required applicant income and worker eligibility information that is accurate, all eligible expenses that reimbursement is being requested for, all attestation boxes must be checked and all attestations must be signed by the applicant using their legal name including the date of signature and printed legal name of the applicant.
- Applicants who submit an application online will be able to view their application status as it moves through the review process by logging into their account.
- Applications will be considered for an award based on the date and time stamp of the submitted application.
- Submitted applications that have issues with the income documentation provided will be notified via email of the problem and will be allowed 14 days to reply to the email with correct documentation attached to confirm income eligibility. Upon submission of the new files, the application will go back into review for award consideration. Applicants will have one opportunity to provide the correct income documentation. If documentation correctly meeting program requirements is not submitted within 14 days of the date on the email notification, the application will not be awarded funding. Keep in mind that funds are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis to applicants submitting a correctly completed application until all funds are exhausted. To have the best chance of receiving an award, submit the required document(s) as soon as possible.

- Applicants that cannot be awarded due to ineligibility, inaccurate and/or missing information or documentation will be notified of their status by email. All award/non-award determinations are final.
- Applications that include expenses that are not eligible for reimbursement will not be reimbursed. The maximum award per household is \$1,000 regardless of the total expenses submitted for reimbursement.
- Please remember that all funding will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis for applicants meeting all grant requirements based on the date and time the application is received. The sooner you apply, the greater your chance of award.
- Once applications are reviewed, eligible applicants who have submitted complete applications will be notified of their status and reimbursement amount, provided funds are still available.

### **Online Application Award Payment Process**

If awarded, payment to online applicants will be made electronically through an online payment system run by PayPal (called HyperWallet). When funds are made available to you, you will receive email notification to the address you provide in your application. Awardees will access their funds by logging into a secure site through that email, and each applicant will have the option to choose their preferred payment method. Applicants will have 60 days from the date of the email to log into the HyperWallet system to select their payment method. If the successful applicant has not completed the process of transferring their award funds in 60 days, the award will be rescinded. There is no fee to the applicant for electronic transfer payments.

The available electronic transfer options are:

- Transfer to your PayPal account (quickest way to get your payment)
- Transfer to your Venmo account (quickest way to get your payment)
- Transfer to your bank account
- Transfer to your existing debit card
- Visa cash card (mailed upon order completion; **allow at least six weeks for delivery. Additional fees may apply to the awardee for card use.**)

### **Paper Application Submission Requirements**

1. All eligible applicants that are part of the same household must complete one combined application.
2. Request an English or Spanish paper application by calling the phone number provided on the OCFS website [here](#). The calling hours and time period for requesting an application will be posted on the OCFS website [here](#). The application will be mailed to the address that you provide.
3. Accurately complete all required fields of the application.
4. Include all required supporting documentation with the application.
5. Sign and date the application and attestations (including printed name where required).



6. Mail the completed application and supporting documentation in the pre-addressed envelope in advance to allow enough time for the paper application to be received by the paper application due date and time above.
7. All notifications to paper applicants will be sent by postal mail.

### **Important Paper Application Notes:**

- To be considered for award, applications must include required applicant income and worker eligibility information that is accurate, all eligible expenses reimbursement is being requested for, all attestation boxes must be checked, and all attestations must be signed by the applicant using their legal name including the date of signature as well as printed legal name of the applicant.
- Applications will be stamped with the date received (not postmark date) and reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Applications that cannot be awarded because they are incomplete, illegible, have answers incorrectly answered, or attestations not completed correctly will be notified. As paper applicants do not have the benefit of online application system edits and typed entry, applicants that submit an incomplete first application will be sent a new application by postal mail and given one chance to complete it again correctly with all required documentation. Upon resubmission, the application will be processed as a new application. These applications will get stamped with a new received date (not postmark) for purposes of first-come, first-served.
- Submitted applications that have issues with the income documentation provided will be notified via postal mail of the problem and allow them 30 days from the date of the letter to send in the required information to the program administrator at the mailing address provided with correct documentation to confirm income eligibility. Upon submission of the new information, the application will go back into review for award consideration before new applications. Applicants will have one opportunity to provide the correct income documentation. If documentation is not submitted within 30 days of the date on the letter, the application will not be awarded funding. Keep in mind that funds are awarded on a first-come, first-served basis to applicants submitting a correctly completed application until all funds are exhausted. To have the best chance of receiving an award, submit the required document(s) as soon as possible.
- Applicants that cannot be awarded due to ineligibility, inaccurate and/or missing information or documentation will be notified of their status by postal mail. All award/non-award determinations are final.
- Applications that include expenses that are not eligible for reimbursement will not be reimbursed. The maximum award per household is \$1,000 regardless of the total expenses submitted for reimbursement.
- Please remember that all funding will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis, for applicants meeting all grant requirements based on the date and time the application is received. The sooner you apply, the greater your chance of award.

- Once applications are reviewed, eligible applicants who have submitted complete applications will be notified of their status and reimbursement amount, provided funds are still available.

### **Paper Application Award Payment Process:**

If awarded, payment to paper applicants will be made via check with notice of award unless the applicant specifically selects an electronic transfer method on the application. Electronic transfer payments will be paid through an online payment system run by PayPal (called HyperWallet). To access the electronic transfer option, applicants must select the electronic transfer payment option in the application and provide an email address in their application. When funds are made available to you, you will receive email notification to the address you provide in your application. Awardees will access their funds by logging into a secure site through that email, and each applicant will have the option to choose their preferred payment method. Applicants will have 60 days from the date of the email to log into the HyperWallet system to select their payment method. If the successful applicant has not completed the process of transferring their award funds in 60 days, the award will be rescinded. There is no fee to the applicant for electronic transfer payments or checks.

The available electronic transfer options are:

- Transfer to your PayPal account (quickest way to get your payment)
- Transfer to your Venmo account (quickest way to get your payment)
- Transfer to your bank account
- Transfer to your existing debit card
- Visa cash card (mailed upon order completion; allow at least six weeks for delivery. Additional fees may apply to the awardee for card use.)