

FY 26 MARCS Grant

(Multi-Agency Radio Communications System)

Ohio Department of Commerce
Division of State Fire Marshal

An Equal Opportunity Employer and Service Provider



State Fire Marshal

Department of Commerce

com.ohio.gov

Mike DeWine, Governor Jim Tressel, Lt. Governor Sherry Maxfield, Director

Re: Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 MARCS Grant Application

Dear Fire Chief or Executive Official,

The Ohio Department of Commerce, Division of State Fire Marshal is pleased to announce that we are now accepting applications for the FY 2026 Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) Grant. **Grant applications are available online September 14, 2025, and must be submitted no later than October 25, 2025**, to be considered.

Please review the FY 2026 MARCS Grant Application package in its entirety to ensure this grant meets your agency's needs.

If you have any questions or require additional assistance, please contact the Grants Administrator at 614-752-7123 or commercegrants@com.ohio.gov.

Complete information and forms can be found at www.com.ohio.gov/fire/grants.

Sincerely,

Sheryl Maxfield, Director
Ohio Department of Commerce

Kevin S. Reardon
State Fire Marshal

FY 2026 MARCS Grant Table of Contents

FY 2026 MARCS Grant Overview	4
I. Purpose.....	4
II. Eligibility	4
III. Eligible Grant Requests/Expenditures.....	5
Equipment:	5
IV. Ineligible Grant Requests	6
V. Special Conditions	6
VI. When and Where to Apply	8
VII. Notification and Distribution of Awards.....	8
VIII. Instructions for Completing Application	12
IX. Notification and Distribution of Awards.....	13
X. Frequently Asked Questions:	14

FY 2026 MARCS Grant Overview

I. Purpose

The Ohio Department of Commerce's Division of State Fire Marshal (SFM) is pleased to announce the availability of grant funding in State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2026 for eligible recipients to purchase systems, equipment, and/or services that are a part of, integrated into, or otherwise interoperable with the Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) operated by the State of Ohio with respect to providing fire protection services.

II. Eligibility

In accordance with the applicable rules regarding equipment grants [Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) Section 1301:7-7-01(T), Ohio Fire Code (OFC) 120], as applied to this program, the following procedures will be followed by the SFM for the awards of the SFY 2026 MARCS Equipment/Services Grants.

Eligible recipients for equipment/services grants awarded under this rule shall meet at least one of the following eligibility criteria:

For purposes of the following eligibility requirements a small municipality or small township is defined as a "duly constituted municipality or village under Title 7 of the Revised Code or township under Title 5 of the Revised Code having a population of less than 25,000 permanent residents."

1. Volunteer Fire Department:

- a. Must be organized by a township or municipal corporation under sections Ohio Revised Code (R.C.) §§ 505.37, or 737.21;
- b. At least one-half of the firefighters are volunteer firefighters.

2. Fire Department:

- a. Must be organized by a township or municipal corporation under R.C. §§ 505.37, or 737.21;
- b. Must serve one or more small municipal corporations or small townships; AND
- c. The small municipal corporation and/or small townships that are being served by the fire department must sign the grant application. (A small municipal corporation or small township has a population of less than 25,000 permanent residents.)

3. Joint Fire District:

- a. Must be organized under R.C. §§ 505.371 or 505.375;
- b. Must primarily serve small municipal corporations and/ or small townships (as noted above a small township or municipal corporation has a population of less than 25,000 permanent residents).

4. Local Government Operating a Fire Department: A township or municipal corporation providing fire protection services that is responsible for one of the following:
 - a. A volunteer fire department under R.C. §§ 505.37, or 737.21 in which at least one half of the firefighters are volunteer firefighters; OR
 - b. A fire department under R.C. §§ 505.37 or 737.21 that serves small municipalities or small townships (as noted above a small township or municipal corporation has a population of less than 25,000 permanent residents); OR
 - c. A portion of a joint fire district comprised of volunteer departments that primarily serves small municipalities or small townships (as noted above a small township or municipal corporation has a population of less than 25,000 permanent residents).
5. Local Government Contracting for Fire Protection Services: Small municipalities or small townships (as noted above a small township or municipal corporation has a population of less than 25,000 permanent residents) contracting with a private fire company or another unit of local government for fire protection services. Local governments that operate their own Fire Department are not included in this category.

Please note: A private fire company is not an eligible recipient for a MARCS grant; however, any qualifying local government contracting with a private fire company may receive a MARCS grant. Such equipment and/or services may be used by a private fire company as a part of its contracted services.

III. Eligible Grant Requests/Expenditures

The following are eligible grant fund requests/expenditures:

Equipment:

- MARCS Radios. Mobile/portable radios shall be configured to MARCS specifications. Radios not configured to MARCS specifications and not interoperable with MARCS service shall not be funded. SFM will provide Radio expense grant funding up to \$3,000. **If you choose a radio type that cost more than \$3,000, the SFM will not fund the additional cost.** This does not include radio accessories.
- MARCS Accessories. Shoulder microphone, holster, antenna, antenna accessories, batteries, cables, chargers, charger accessories, mounts, speakers, and Bluetooth functionality. Accessories not listed on the Approved Worksheets will not be funded.

Services:

- MARCS Monthly Services, up to 12 months. Grant funds will be provided for expenditures incurred as of the recipient's return of a signed grant agreement. Service expenditures incurred prior to the return of the signed grant agreement will not be funded. Monthly service fees may be requested for new and previously owned radios on MARCS system. Monthly service fees shall be calculated
\$5.00 per month X number of radios, multiplied by 12 months.

Example: \$5 monthly service fees X 10 radios = \$50 X 12 months = \$600.00

Whereas service fees are eligible grant expenses for this grant cycle, priority for awarded funding will be given to equipment purchases. Service fees should not be anticipated and are not guaranteed in future grant cycles.

- Programming. Programming of all radios purchased with grant shall be programmed by vendor. DAS MARCS may not provide programming of radios purchased with FY 2026 MARCS grants.
- Installation
- Mounting

IV. Ineligible Grant Requests

The following are ineligible grant fund requests and will not be considered:

- Dual band features and functionality (if purchasing dual band radios, all dual band features and functionality shall be separated in the vendor quote and funded by the local agency)
- Pagers not compatible with MARCS; or
- Warranties or insurance for radio equipment.

V. Special Conditions

Purchases made with FY 2026 MARCS GRANT funds become the property of the township, municipal corporation or joint fire district established under R.C. §§ 505.371 or 505.375.

The eligible recipient must agree to adhere to the following:

- a. All sections of the electronic application must be filled out completely and the required documentation must be submitted with the application. Grant applications must be submitted on or before the deadline. Applications will not be considered for a FY 2026 MARCS GRANT after the deadline.

- b. The maximum amount of an award to each eligible recipient shall be \$50,000. Application requests greater than \$50,000 will be reduced accordingly.
- c. All applicants are required to obtain and submit a copy of a quote for all equipment requested for grant funding. Quote(s) from vendors must be valid until February 28, 2026.
- d. The authorized person(s) of the eligible recipient including the municipal corporation(s) and/or township(s) authorized official shall certify that the grant application is true and accurate.

*Government entities contracting with a private fire company must provide the federal tax identification number, fiscal officer information and certification signature of the government entity applying, not the private fire company.

- e. All applicants must be in compliance with R.C. §3737.24 (Reporting Fire Incidents). Applicants not in compliance with this section will be disqualified from further consideration for the 2026 MARCS Grant. The applicant/associated fire department should confirm NFIRS compliance by logging into <https://sfmengage.com.ohio.gov/> and hovering over “Incidents”, choose “Incident Summary Report-PDF” or “Incident Summary-Grid”, then select the to and from date and click “Generate Report” at the bottom right of the report. If there are discrepancies or assistance is needed, contact the Fire Prevention Bureau at (614) 752-7115.
- f. If applicable, applicants must be compliant with R.C. Chapter 146, Volunteer Firefighters’ Dependents Fund (VFDF). In accordance with the Revised Code Chapter 146, each political subdivision or fire district having a fire department employing volunteer firefighters is a member of the volunteer firefighter dependents fund and shall pay premiums into the fund as required. Non-compliant fire departments will be disqualified from receiving grants from the State Fire Marshal’s office until compliant. All applicants are cross referenced with the VFDF database. If applicant/associated fire department is uncertain of their compliance, contact the Grants Administrator at (614) 752-7123 or commercegrants@com.ohio.gov for verification or, if needed, instructions on how to become compliant.
- g. Upon request, items purchased with grant monies must be made available for inspection by a representative of the SFM. Because the grant involves public funds, the grant recipient must comply with all applicable laws and regulations. The grant recipient shall maintain auditable records of all charges pertaining to this grant and shall make such records available to SFM upon request for three (3) years after all conditions have been met.
- h. Grant recipients shall not purchase any equipment and/or services until after the grant recipient receives from the SFM a grant agreement notifying the recipient of an award, signs the grant agreement, and returns the signed

grant agreement to the SFM. All variances and extensions must be submitted in writing to the State Fire Marshal and approved prior to expenditure.

- i. Newly purchased radio equipment shall be activated with Ohio MARCS within three (3) months from delivery and remain on the system for a minimum of twelve (12) months.
- j. Fire Department must be active in the system at time of award.
- k. All grant recipients shall submit to SFM copies of all paid invoices outlined in the terms and conditions of the grant award agreement. The paid invoices shall be emailed to commercegrants@com.ohio.gov or mailed to:

Division of State Fire Marshal
Grants Administrator
8895 East Main Street
Reynoldsburg, OH 43068

VI. When and Where to Apply

The FY 2026 MARCS GRANT application period is open from September 14, 2025 – October 25, 2025. The completed application consists of:

- 1) FY 2026 MARCS GRANT Application (Must submit a complete application online at www.com.ohio.gov/fire/grants); and
- 2) Approved 2026 MARCS Mobile and Portable Equipment/Services Worksheets) (Must submit online at www.com.ohio.gov/fire/grants); and
- 3) Copy of quote from vendor which is valid until February 28, 2026. The vendor quote must be scanned and upload online as part of a complete application submission.

This FY 2026 MARCS Online Grant worksheet guidance document is available on-line at our website: www.com.ohio.gov/fire/grants

This worksheet guidance document is to be used for reference only. The grant application must be entered online on or before the deadline. Paper and faxed applications will not be accepted.

VII. Notification and Distribution of Awards

Grant Agreements (Award letters) will be mailed/emailed to the eligible recipient when the review process has been completed. Grant funds will be disbursed shortly after all grant award agreements have been signed and returned to the SFM. Grant recipients shall not purchase any equipment and/or services until after the grant recipient receives from the SFM a grant agreement notifying the recipient

of an award, signs the grant agreement, and returns the signed grant agreement to the SFM. Non-award letters will be forwarded within the same approximate timeframe.

FY 2026 MARCS GRANT ONLINE APPLICATION

Each blank must be filled in and the online application must be certified by the applicants authorized personnel. Please read the entire application and follow the instructions for each of the following items. If you have questions, please contact grant administration at 614-752-7123 or by email at commercegrants@com.ohio.gov.

LINE BY LINE INSTRUCTIONS FOR ONLINE APPLICATION:

Line #

1. Indicate which eligibility criteria under section **II. Eligibility** is applicable to your organization.
 - A private fire company is not an eligible recipient for a MARCS grant; however, any qualifying local government contracting with a private fire company may receive a MARCS grant. Such equipment and/or services may be used by a private fire company as a part of its contracted services.
2. Fire Department Identification Number (FDID #): Enter the five (5) digit number used to identify the department on the state fire incident report forms. Print name of fire department and if applicable, print government entity applying.
 - Government entity information required **only if contracting** with private fire company or another unit of local government for fire protection services.
3. Number of full-time paid firefighters: In Ohio, full time paid firefighters will be members of the Police and Firemen's Pension Fund.
4. Number of firefighters who are part time or paid per call: Enter the number of firefighters who are not full time but who do receive some form of monetary compensation.
5. Number of firefighters who are not paid: Enter the number of firefighters who do not receive compensation.
6. Current Fire Incident Reports: All applicants must be in compliance with R.C. §3737.24 (Reporting Fire Incidents). Applicants not in compliance with this section will be disqualified from further consideration for the 2026 MARCS Grant. The applicant/associated fire department should confirm NFIRS compliance by logging into <https://sfmengage.com.ohio.gov/> and hovering over "Incidents", choose "Incident Summary Report-PDF" or "Incident Summary-Grid", then select the to and from date and click "Generate Report" at the bottom right of the report.

If there are discrepancies or assistance is needed, contact the Fire Prevention Bureau at (614) 752-7115.

7. Volunteer Firefighters' Dependents Fund (if applicable): When required in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code Chapter 146, each political subdivision or fire district having a fire department employing volunteer firefighters is a member of the volunteer firefighter dependents fund and shall pay premiums into the fund as required. Non-compliant fire departments will be disqualified from receiving grants from the State Fire Marshal's office until compliant. All applicants are cross referenced with the VFDF database. If applicant/associated fire department is uncertain of their compliance, contact commercegrants@com.ohio.gov for verification or if needed instructions on how to become compliant.
8. Provide contact information for an individual who is available by telephone or email during business hours (8 – 4) or can respond within twenty-four (24) hours to questions about your grant application.
9. Total population protected: Enter the population of the area for which the applicant provides **primary fire protection**. Include territory under contract if **primary fire protection** is provided. Do not include territory where you respond under a mutual aid agreement to provide supplemental protection. This figure should be as accurate as possible.
10. Source of population protected figures: Indicate where you obtained the population figures.
11. Square miles protected: Enter the total square miles of the area for which your department provides **primary fire protection**. Include territory under contract if primary protection is provided. Do not include territory where you respond under mutual aid agreement to provide supplemental protection. This figure should be as accurate as possible.
12. Total operating budget for calendar year: Total operating budget includes money provided from taxes and fire protection contracts, as well as from fund raising and donations used for operating expenses. Do not include capital expenses for new trucks, buildings, or EMS budget.
13. Total number of fires: For **primary fire protection** only, provide the total number of fire incidents/calls/responses requiring a NFIRS report for dates requested. All applications are cross referenced with the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS).

14. Enter the Federal Tax Identification number: Example: This number usually starts with the number "31" and will look something like this "31-1234567". If the eligible applicant is the fire department, please provide the fire department's federal tax id number. If the eligible applicant is a government entity, please provide the government's federal tax id. number.
15. Name, address, daytime telephone number with area code and title of the financial officer of the grant recipient. The grant award will be sent to the financial officer for the grant recipient. If the fire department is the eligible applicant, the fiscal officer information for the fire department should be provided. If the government entity is applying, the fiscal officer for the government entity information should be supplied as well as the Ohio Supplier Number for all applicants.
16. Multi-jurisdictional: Check yes if other jurisdictions from the same county or region are also applying for grants in a collaborative effort to acquire or complete MARCS service in the respective county or region. Check no if you are not working together with other jurisdictions from your county or region to acquire or complete MARCS service.
17. If answer to question 16 is yes, list all the other fire departments and/or governmental entities that are part of the multi-jurisdictional effort to acquire or complete MARCS service.
18. List all fire departments and/or governmental entities currently utilizing MARCS services in your county or region.
19. Certification: Application must be certified by the chief of the fire department and when applicable (See section II Eligibility and 2 (c)), the person authorized to act on behalf of the township or municipal corporation validating the information is true and accurate.

Government entity certification signature is required **only** if contracting with private fire company or another unit of local government for fire protection services.

20. Submitter Information: Provide the Name, daytime telephone number with area code and title and email address of the individual who is submitting the application.
21. Supporting Documentation: Any supporting documentation, such as vendor quotes, letters of support and cover letters .

*****Please retain a copy for your records. *****

VIII. Instructions for Completing Application

APPROVED 2026 MARCS EQUIPMENT/SERVICES ONLINE WORKSHEET

Approved Equipment Request

1. The purpose of the “Approved 2026 MARCS Equipment/Services Mobile and Portable Worksheets” is to indicate the type, quantity, and cost of the equipment and/or services purchase from the approved equipment/services list. The decision to purchase equipment and/or services is at the discretion of the Fire Chief and/or the Chief Executive Officer of the government entity. These grant funds are intended to provide supplemental funding to purchase systems, equipment, or services that are a part of, integrated into, or otherwise interoperable with the Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) operated by the State of Ohio. Estimates should be obtained from your supplier and itemized on the chart. This is not a matching grant, and the **maximum** amount awarded is \$50,000. If you are awarded a grant, equipment and/or services **cannot** be ordered or purchased before the grant agreement is signed and returned by the fire chief and/or chief executive officer to the State Fire Marshal as provided in Section VII. above. The full amount awarded must be spent in accordance with your application.

Please adhere to the following instructions when completing the Approved 2026 MARCS Equipment/Services Worksheet:

- a) Complete the requested fire departmental information; AND
- b) Indicate the unit cost, quantity, and accurately calculate the total cost for each item requested; AND
- c) For total cost calculation, add items requested in Total Cost column to reach Total Amount Requested.

Please read all instructions and verify worksheet is complete prior to submitting. Applications must be signed by the designated signature authority and submitted online no later than the deadline.

If you have questions concerning the MARCS Grant call 614-752-7123 or commercegrants@com.ohio.gov.

See Section III. above for eligible grant fund expenditures.

*****Please retain a copy for your records. *****

2026 MARCS GRANT SCORING

In accordance with the applicable rules regarding equipment grants, Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) Section 1301:7-7-01(T), Ohio Fire Code (OFC) 120, as applied to this program, the following procedures will be followed by the Ohio Department of Commerce, Division of State Fire Marshal (SFM) for the awards of the 2026 MARCS Grants.

IX. Notification and Distribution of Awards

Based on the scoring system outlined below established by the State Fire Marshal, each eligible recipient will accumulate points based on specific information contained in their grant application. Applicants with the highest scores that meet eligibility requirements will be awarded grants based upon the availability of funds. In the event of a score tie, the available funds will be awarded according to the following priorities:

1. Eligible recipient with the lowest operating budget.
2. Eligible recipient with the largest protection area.
3. Eligible recipient with the largest population.

The scoring system generated for this grant cycle is calculated based upon the following:

1. Resident Population Protected: An increasing number of points are awarded for the total resident population protected up to 25,000 residents. Applicants consisting of “paid” fire departments serving, or joint fire districts primarily serving, municipal or township populations greater than 25,000 will not be considered.
2. Fire Protection Area Size: An increasing number of points are awarded based on the square mile protection area for which the eligible recipient provides primary fire protection. There is no limit to square mile protection area.
3. Operating Budget: The total operating budget for the 2025 calendar year is included in determining points awarded. There is no minimum or maximum budget requirement however smaller budgets generally receive more points.
4. Number of fire incidents/calls/responses requiring a fire incident report: During the applicable calendar year, an increasing number of points are awarded for a higher number of structure, vehicle and wildland fire incidents/calls/responses requiring a fire incident report responded to in the primary fire protection area. This number must be consistent with submitted fire incident reports.
5. Multi-jurisdictional Requests: Equipment/services requests from multiple jurisdictions from the same county or region which are collaboratively applying for grants to acquire or complete MARCS service in the respective county or region may receive special consideration, even if the departments have been previously awarded
6. Link Layer Authentication Activation: will have a maximum award of \$70 per radio. Radios purchased after April 2020 qualify for this eligible expense.

*** For copies of the portions of House Bill 64 of the 131th General Assembly that create the SFM's MARCS Grant program, Ohio Administrative Code 1301:7-7-01(T), 2011 Ohio Fire Code Section 120 (Grants administration), Chapter 146 of the Revised Code (Volunteer Firefighters Dependent's Fund), and the sections of Ohio law regulating the reporting of fires to the SFM, please go to the following website: www.com.ohio.gov/fire or call (800) 515-0023. ***

MARCS Grant FAQ

X. Frequently Asked Questions:

1) Will the grant application be electronic this year?

Yes, the MARCS grant will be electronic through a web portal on the State Fire Marshal's website. The requested information will be similar to previous years. The paper application will still be available on the website for use as a worksheet as applicants are preparing their grant.

2) What is the maximum price for a radio?

We will allow up to \$3,000 per radio (portable or mobile) for the basic radio. Accessories, installation, programming and user fees are considered additional costs above the \$3,000 limit.

3) Can we purchase dual band radios?

Dual band radios will not be considered an allowable item for this year's grant. If an applicant wishes to purchase a dual band radio, the applicant must pay for the dual band functionality above the cost of a single band MARCS radio from local funds. The invoice should have this cost broken out.

4) Can private fire companies apply for MARCS radios?

MARCS radio grants will only be awarded to governmental entities. If you are a private company and wish to apply for funding, you must work with a local government entity that you serve to complete an application. Such equipment and/or services may be used by the private fire company as a part of its contracted services. The government entity is responsible for all reporting requirements and is the owner of the equipment.

5) How do we complete a regional or county-wide application?

Applications that request MARCS coverage in an entire county or region will be given priority for funding. It is important to note that each individual agency within the county will need to complete their own application with individual demographics and statistical data. We require each application lists the other county partners and FDIDs, which will result in the individual applications being bundled together upon receipt at the Marshal's Office.

To be considered for a county-wide or regional application, all agencies in the county must either be a current MARCS user or be requesting funding for radios. Please be sure to list all other county fire departments that are applying for MARCS funding as well as all agencies that are presently utilizing the MARCS system.

6) What is the rate for current MARCS user fees?

State legislature renewed the \$5 subsidy per radio per month for local government users.

7) When will funds actually be sent to us?

Funding will be available once the grant is awarded and accepted by your organization. Funds are available prior to the purchase of equipment. This is NOT a reimbursement grant. Funding will be sent to the recipient using the Ohio Supplier OH ID number. <https://ohiopays.ohio.gov/>