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**Agency of Human Services**  
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## Vermont Hazard Pay Grant Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### Summary:

- Governor Scott has authorized \$28 million for a Front-Line Employees Hazard Pay Grant Program for certain public safety, public health, health care, and human services employers whose employees were engaged in activities substantially dedicated to mitigating or responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency during the eligible time period, March 13, 2020 through May 15, 2020. These funds have been made available to the State of Vermont through the Federal Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) CFDA #21.019. The Agency of Human Services (AHS) is administering this program that is authorized through Act 136 of 2020.
- The application period opened for eligible applicants on Tuesday, August 4th, 2020 at 9 AM EST. Grants will be awarded through an online application process and funds will be distributed on a **first-come, first-served basis**.
- Guidance documents are available through the links below:
  - Program Guidance found [here](#)
  - Application Instructions found [here](#)
- The following FAQs and responses have been grouped by category.

### General Questions

#### 1. **Who is eligible to apply for the Hazard Pay Grant Program?**

Only Covered Employers and ARIS Solutions, the fiscal agent for the employers of the independent direct support providers, may apply for a lump sum grant award to be distributed to Eligible Employees in the amounts of \$1,200 or \$2,000 per employee. **Individual employees are not eligible to apply.**

#### 2. **Which employers are considered Covered Employers that may submit applications, and which are not?**

A Covered Employer is an entity that employs one or more individuals in Vermont in relation to its operation of one of the following:

- Ambulance service or first responder service as defined in [24 V.S.A. §2651](#)

- Assisted living residence as defined in [33 V.S.A. §7102](#)
- Dentist’s office or a dental facility
- Federally qualified health center, rural health clinic, or clinic for the uninsured
- Health care facility as defined in [18 VS.A. §9432](#) or a physician’s office
- Home health agency as defined in [33 V.S.A. §6302](#) and any employer that a home health agency has contracted with to provide physical, speech, respiratory, or occupational therapy on its behalf, provided that such an employer shall only be permitted to receive a grant to provide hazard pay to its employees for therapy services provided on behalf of the home health agency
- Homeless shelter
- Morgue
- Nursing home as defined in [33 V.S.A. §7102](#) and any employer that a nursing home has contracted with for the provision of physical, speech, respiratory, or occupational therapy, provided that such an employer shall only be permitted to receive a grant to provide hazard pay to its employees for therapy services provided in the nursing home
- Program licensed by the Department for Children and Families as a residential treatment program
- Provider of necessities and services to vulnerable or disadvantaged populations
- Residential care home as defined in [33 V.S.A. §7102](#)
- Therapeutic community residence as defined in [33 V.S.A. §7102](#)

Covered Employers do not include:

- The State
- A political subdivision of the State
- The United States
- An agency designated to provide mental health or developmental services, or both, pursuant to [18 V.S.A chapter 207](#)
- An agency with which the Commissioner of Mental Health or of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, or both, has contracted to provide specialized services pursuant to [18 V.S.A. §8912](#).

Other organizations that do not operate a facility, office, program or service listed above are not eligible to apply for Hazard Pay Grant Program funding.

It is possible that some employers that are not considered Covered Employers for Hazard Pay Grant Program funds might be eligible for Economic Recovery Grants through the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. Information on that program can be found here: [Economic Recovery Grants](#).

**3. What is the application submission timeline?**

Application Submission Period	Time Period Covering
August 4, 2020 – October 31, 2020 on a first-come, first-served basis	March 13, 2020 – May 15, 2020

Applications should be submitted electronically using the web-based form as soon as possible starting on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020. A large number of applications have been received as of August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and demand for grant funds could soon exceed available funding. Funding determinations will be made for eligible applications on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to available funding.

**4. Is there a time limit on when I can spend the grant?**

Yes. Eligible Covered Employers are required to acknowledge and agree that they must spend Hazard Pay Grant Program funds for eligible employees within 90 days of the grant award or by December 15, 2020, whichever is earlier. All unspent funds must be returned to the State of Vermont.

**5. What happens if more eligible Covered Employers apply than there are available funds for grants?**

Funding will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis as long as there is still funding available. As of August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, a large number of applications have been received. Funding requests may soon exceed available funding.

**6. How can I stay up to date on information regarding the Hazard Pay Grant Program?**

The latest information regarding the Hazard Pay Grant Program and any other COVID-19 funding opportunities will continue to be posted at <https://dvha.vermont.gov/front-line-employees-hazard-pay-grant-program> as it becomes available. This is the best place to check for up-to-date information. To sign up for periodic e-mail updates about the program, complete [this online form](#).

**7. What will happen if AHS needs more information after I submit my application?**

A reviewer will review your application and the documents you uploaded for accuracy and to ensure all necessary information was provided. If anything appears to be missing, a reviewer will contact you using the primary contact information provided during registration.

**8. When will my organization know if we are approved for a grant award?**

A review team is currently reviewing all applications. A large number of applications were received. All applications received in August should be reviewed by mid-September. Applicants will receive notices by email as soon as their grants are reviewed.

**9. What happens after my organization is approved for a grant award?**

Your organization will receive an email stating you are approved for a grant award. You will also receive two additional emails after you are approved. You will receive a grant award email that includes the terms of your grant award. These terms are in addition to the certifications you made in your application. You will also receive an email about the spending report you must submit no later than ninety (90) days after receiving the grant or December 15, 2020, whichever is earlier. A check will be mailed to the address in your organization's W-9.

**10. I received an email stating that my application is incomplete and I need to correct it through the online grant portal. How do I locate my username?**

Your username was assigned to you when you started your application. It is your email address with .vtgrants added at the end. For example, if your email address is info@xyz.com, then your username is info@xyz.com.vtgrants. You should have received an email with this information when you first began your grant application. If you did not receive this email, check your junk or spam folder.

### **Questions About Eligibility**

**11. Which employees are considered Eligible Employees?**

To be considered an Eligible Employee, the employee must meet the following criteria:

- Is employed by the Covered Employer
- Performs a job that had an elevated risk of exposure to COVID-19 during the eligible period, which is March 13, 2020 through May 15, 2020
- Was unable to perform their job remotely or to telework, including by providing health care or other services by telephone, videoconference, or telehealth
- Earns an hourly base wage of \$25.00 or less, except in the case of employees of home health agencies and nursing homes
- Worked at least 68 hours for a Covered Employer during the eligible period
- Is not eligible to receive monetary benefits for the performance of their job under any program authorized or implemented by the federal government

Additional information about these eligibility criteria including a definition for “elevated risk of exposure to COVID-19” and factors for determining hours is located in the Program Guidance found [here](#).

Applicant payroll reports may be requested by AHS to support the Hazard Pay Grant Program payments requested to be paid and could be subject to audit.

**12. Are volunteers eligible for Hazard Pay Grant Program funds?**

Volunteers are not eligible because they would not meet the criteria of being employed by a Covered Employer.

**13. Can I calculate an hourly base wage for my employees who receive a salary?**

Applicants may calculate an hourly base wage for employees who have an annual salary.

**14. Is a municipal ambulance service eligible when the ambulance service is under the Town/reports to a Select Board?**

Covered Employers do not include "a political subdivision of the state" such as a town or county and therefore a town or county may not apply for this opportunity.

**15. Is an employee able to receive Hazard Pay Grant Program payments through more than one employer?**

Only Covered Employers may apply for this grant opportunity. Each Covered Employer that applies will indicate which of their employees are eligible, per the Hazard Pay Grant Program requirements. If an employee meets these criteria for more than one Covered Employer, both of the Covered Employers may apply for grant funding to provide the employee Hazard Pay Grant Program payments for the performance of their different jobs.

**16. Is an employee able to receive Hazard Pay Grant Program payments through this program if they have received hazard pay payments from an employer or another state?**

Eligible Employees in Vermont who received hazard pay payments from an employer or another state (e.g., New Hampshire) may be eligible for Hazard Pay Grant Program payments; the receipt of payment from an employer or another state does not make them ineligible.

**17. Would working from your own home or being on call from your own home be considered in the hours worked?**

In the Program Guidance found [here](#) (page 6), "Factors for Determining the Number of Hours Worked" indicates that any hours of remote or telework performed by the Eligible Employee (including the provision of healthcare or other services by telephone, videoconference, or telehealth) should not be included.

**18. Are former employees eligible?**

Employees must be employed by the Covered Employer in order to be considered Eligible Employees. Employees who are no longer working for the employer are not eligible.

**19. If I am a Covered Employer and also worked for my business, can I qualify for a Hazard Pay Grant Program payments?**

If you are also an employee of the organization that is applying, and meet the employee eligibility criteria, then you may also receive a Hazard Pay Grant Program payment. Please see the Program Guidance found [here](#) for information about Eligible Employees.

**20. Are independent direct support providers eligible for Hazard Pay Grant Program payments and do their employers need to submit a Hazard Pay Grant Program application on their behalf?**

Independent direct support providers may be eligible to receive Hazard Pay Grant Program payments. ARIS Solutions (ARIS) is the fiscal agent for the employers of independent direct support providers, which are defined in [21 V.S.A. §1631](#). ARIS is specifically mentioned in Act 136 of 2020, allowing ARIS to apply for a Hazard Pay Grant Program grant on behalf of the independent employers. Details for the Hazard Pay Grant Program process for independent employers and their employees will come directly from ARIS, which is applying on behalf of eligible independent direct support providers.

**21. My business was deemed an essential business during the height of the pandemic. Does that make me eligible to apply for this program?**

Only certain public safety, public health, health care, and human services employers are eligible to apply at this time. Covered Employers are further defined in Question 2 above.

**22. Are out-of-state employers eligible to apply for this funding if they provide services in Vermont?**

The Covered Employer could be a parent company from another state that has a branch location in Vermont. The Covered Employer must employ one or more individuals in Vermont in relation to its operation. Covered Employers must enter the employee's name, work site location and work site address in the application using the Summary Report of Eligible Employees which you can find [here](#). Eligible Employees must perform their job in a work site located in Vermont.

**23. We contract with an outside company for certain services in our health care facility. Can we apply for their employees?**

No, Act 136 of 2020 defines eligible employees as individuals who are employed by a Covered Employer that has applied for a grant through the Program. The employees of your contractor are only eligible if the contractor is a Covered Employer and could apply on its own.

**24. We received a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan from the federal government and paid our employees hazard pay with these monies. Can we still apply for the Hazard Pay Grant Program?**

Yes, your PPP loan does not disqualify you from applying for this grant or your Eligible Employees from receiving payments.

**25. Is there additional information we can share with our employees about the potential impact of Hazard Pay Grant Program payments on public benefits?**

AHS is developing information for Eligible Employees to support them in understanding the potential impact of hazard pay on public benefits. This will be posted to the Hazard Pay Grant Program website soon.

**26. I received grant funding to disburse hazard pay to Eligible Employees at my organization. One employee recently gave notice that they are terminating employment. May I still provide them with hazard pay?**

In order to be eligible to receive hazard pay from a Covered Employer, an individual must have been an employee at the time the Covered Employer submitted an application that included their name and eligibility information. If the individual terminates their employment after the date the application with their name and eligibility information was submitted, then the Covered Employer may disburse hazard pay to the individual if the Covered Employer is able to do so. There may be situations where a Covered Employer is unable to disburse hazard pay to a recently terminated employee, such as not being able to add the recently terminated employee onto payroll or not being able to locate the recently terminated employee. In these circumstances, funding may be returned to the State of Vermont.

### Questions About Completing the Application

**27. Does the employee or employer fill out this information?**

Only Covered Employers may apply for this grant opportunity to provide Hazard Pay Grant Program payments to their Eligible Employees.

**28. What do I need to prepare in advance to apply?**

Detailed Application Instructions can be found [here](#).

Before you get started with the application, you will want to have the following information available:

- Vermont employer identification number (7-digit number used for Vermont Department of Labor filings). Providing this number is not required but helps populate some of the application required fields.
- Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) or Social Security Number if you are filing as a Sole Proprietor.
- Contact information for the individual responsible for the application.

You will also want to have the following documents available for uploading:

- W-9 Form.
- Summary Report of Eligible Employees.

You will also need to establish a process to permit Eligible Employees to elect not to receive Hazard Pay Grant Program payments and record keeping procedures to track which employees have elected not to receive a grant. You do not need to upload these documents; however, you will need to certify that you established this process and record keeping procedures in your application.

**29. Should Columns E, F, and G of the Summary Report of Eligible Employees be completed with “Yes” or “No”?**

Yes, they should be completed with “Yes” or “No”. See detailed Application Instructions [here](#).

### Questions About Payments to Eligible Employees

**30. How will Eligible Employees receive their Hazard Pay Grant Program payments? Will they receive checks directly, or does the Covered Employer issue checks?**

Covered Employers make payroll payments to Eligible Employees after receiving Hazard Pay Grant Program funds from the State of Vermont.

**31. Are Hazard Pay Grant Program payments to Eligible Employees taxable?**

Yes, Hazard Pay Grant Program payments made to Eligible Employees are taxable. Covered Employers may deduct both the employee's and employer's share of payroll taxes from the Hazard Pay Grant Program amount provided to employees.

**32. As the Covered Employer, can we only deduct taxes withheld from the employee (federal, state and employee FICA 7.65%) or can we also deduct the employer share of FICA tax (7.65%)?**

Covered Employers may only request funding to disburse as Hazard Pay Grant Program payments. Covered Employers may therefore elect to deduct both the employee's and employer's share of payroll taxes from the Hazard Pay Grant Program amount provided to employees.

**33. Can the Covered Employer charge an administrative fee in relation to requesting funding and distributing Hazard Pay Grant Program payments to Eligible Employees?**

No, Covered Employers may not charge Eligible Employees a fee to provide the employee with Hazard Pay Grant Program funding.

**34. Can Covered Employers recoup from the Hazard Pay Grant Program funds they have already paid to employees?**

No, all Hazard Pay Grant Program funds must be disbursed to Eligible Employees or returned to the State of Vermont. The Covered Employer may not reduce or otherwise recoup funds paid to or owed to an Eligible Employee for work performed during the eligible period to reimburse the Covered Employer for hazard pay previously provided to the Eligible Employee.