

# **Essential First Responders Recognition Payment Allocation Plan**



**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT *of*  
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

**June 1, 2022**

# Program Allocation Plan

## Department of Economic Opportunity – Essential First Responders Recognition Payment Allocation Plan

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## Program Overview

Under the leadership of Governor Ron DeSantis, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) is supporting the state of Florida's effort to recognize essential first responders for their sacrifice and contributions to the state through the implementation of the Essential First Responders Recognition Program (Program).

DEO administered the payments for the Pandemic First Responders Program in fiscal year 2021-2022 as appropriated in Section 152 of Ch. 21-036, Laws of Florida. The Pandemic First Responders Program provided up to \$1,000 in individual, qualified disaster relief payments to Florida's First Responders in recognition of the courage, sacrifice, and dedication those individuals showed in serving Floridians and their communities. These payments were qualified disaster relief payments under 26 U.S.C. § 139.

For a second year in a row, the Florida legislature approved Governor Ron DeSantis' request for a new round of recognition payments to reward Florida's Essential First Responders for their public service. Pursuant to sections 195 and 197 of the 2022-2023 fiscal year General Appropriations Act (GAA), \$125,000,000 is allocated for a one-time recognition payment of up to \$1,000, after taxes, for each essential first responder employed by a Florida local government as of May 1, 2022, as a sworn law enforcement officer, emergency medical technician, firefighter, or paramedic.

DEO worked directly with Florida's local governments to gather information necessary to make payments to Florida's essential first responders and to provide required reports back to the Executive Office of the Governor and the Florida legislature. Local government employers will assist DEO in gathering additional required information and to make determinations on their employee's eligibility based on the guidance provided by DEO.

## Eligibility Criteria

DEO adopted the eligibility criteria below and will provide these as guidelines to Local government employers. Local government employers are responsible for identifying employees that meet these criteria and attesting to their eligibility upon submission of the payment template discussed later in the document.

- Employment Job Classes – The employee must be an essential first responder who is employed by a local government as a:
  - Sworn Law Enforcement Officer, or
  - Emergency medical technician, or
  - Firefighter, or
  - Paramedic

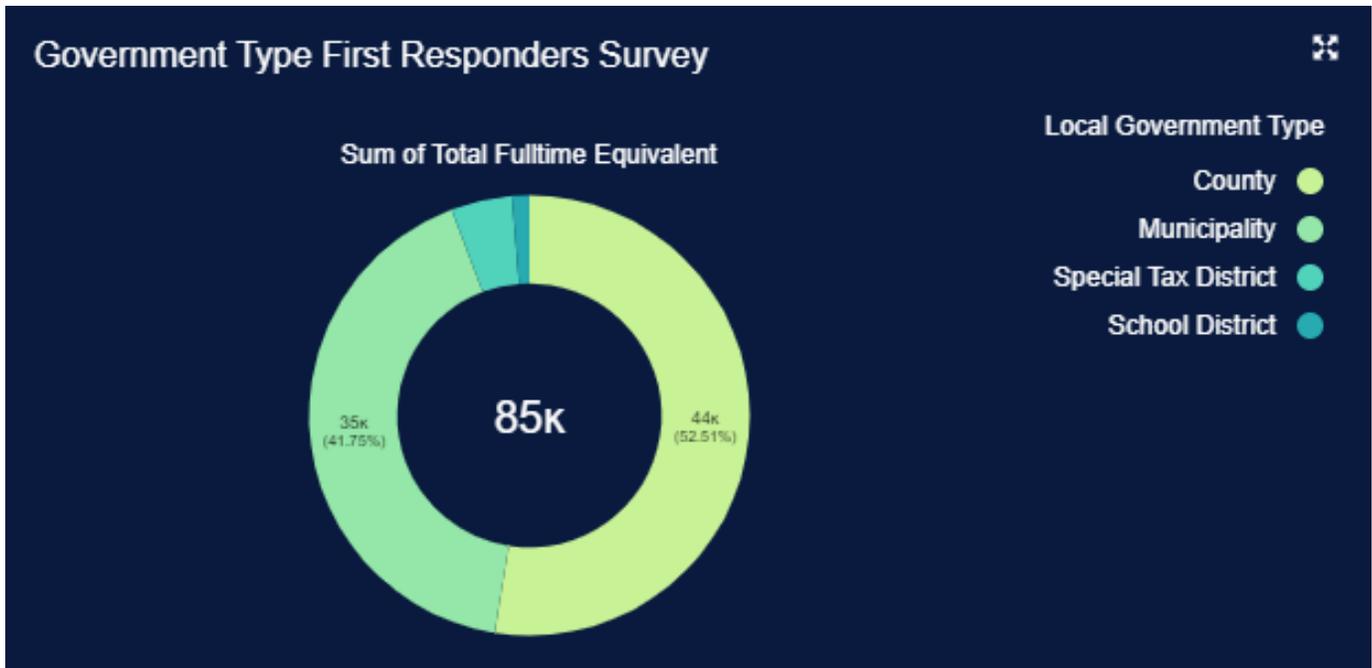
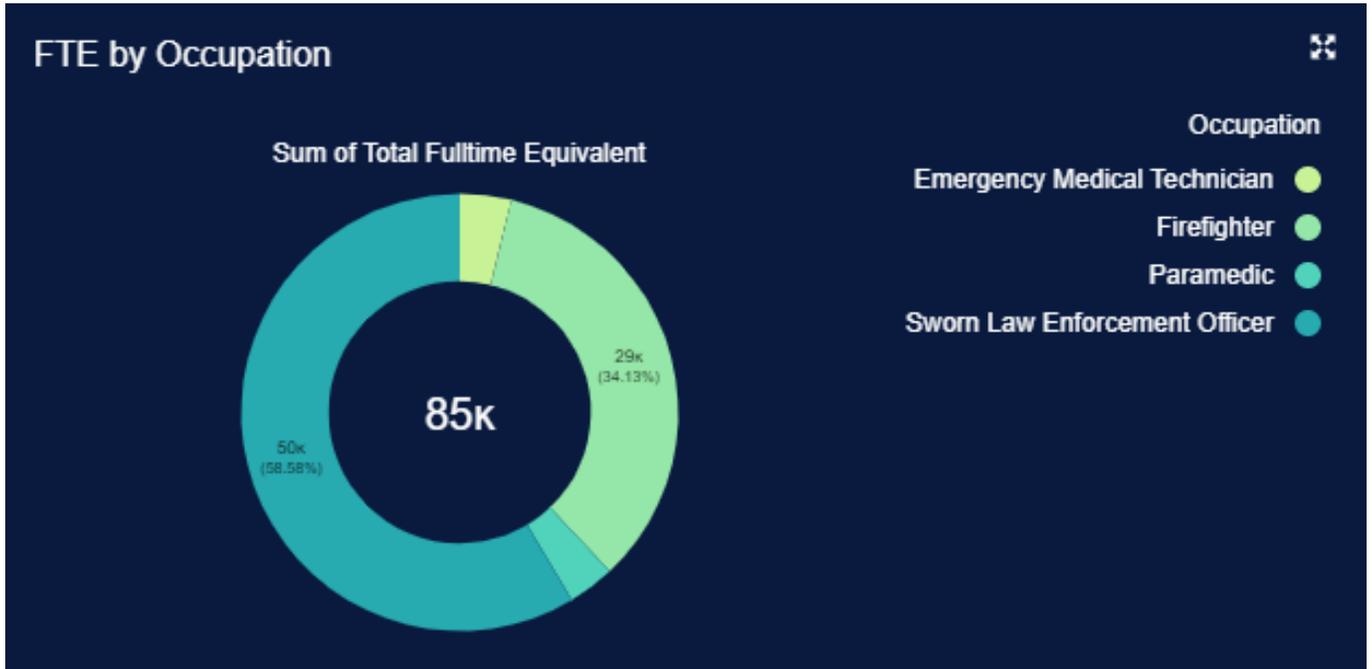
- Employment Period –
  - The essential first responder must be employed by the local government as of May 1, 2022.
- FTE Count –
  - FTE Count 0.25 (the employee works at least 10 hours per week) = \$250 recognition payment, after taxes
  - FTE Count 0.50 (the employee works at least 20 hours per week) = \$500 recognition payment, after taxes
  - FTE Count 0.75 (the employee works at least 30 hours per week) = \$750 recognition payment, after taxes
  - FTE Count 1.00 (the employee works at least 40 hours per week) = \$1,000 recognition payment, after taxes

## Allocation Method

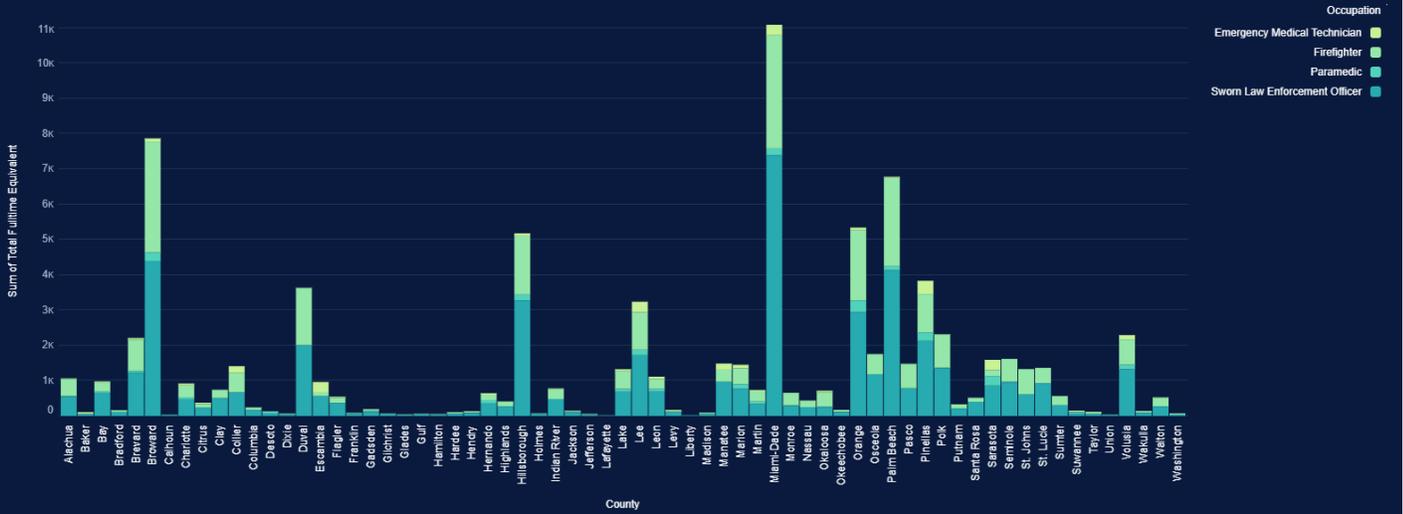
DEO is required to develop an allocation method to distribute local support grants to Florida local governments based on the number of essential first responders employed by the Florida local government as of May 1, 2022. The allocation method shall be submitted to the Executive Office of the Governor's Office of Policy and Budget and the chairs of the Legislative Budget Commission by June 1, 2022. Local support grants for essential first responder recognition payments shall not exceed \$125,000,000, and DEO shall first make payments from the unexpended balance of funds reverted and appropriated in section 195 of the GAA for the same purpose. DEO is authorized to submit budget amendments, pursuant to chapter 216, Florida Statutes, as necessary to distribute local support grants for essential first responder recognition payments as soon as possible.

DEO contacted all Florida local governments and shared a survey on May 3, 2022. The purpose of the survey was to engage with every Florida local government to provide the correct point of contact for each first responder employing agency within their jurisdiction, as well as the number of eligible positions employed as of May 1, 2022. Florida local governments have designated each employing agency's Payment Point of Contact (PPC), which will be responsible for coordinating the compilation of data about the employing agency's eligible employees and completing the payment template discussed in the next section. Each PPC will attest to the eligibility of their employees when the payment template is submitted.

## Data Collected During Allocation Method Survey

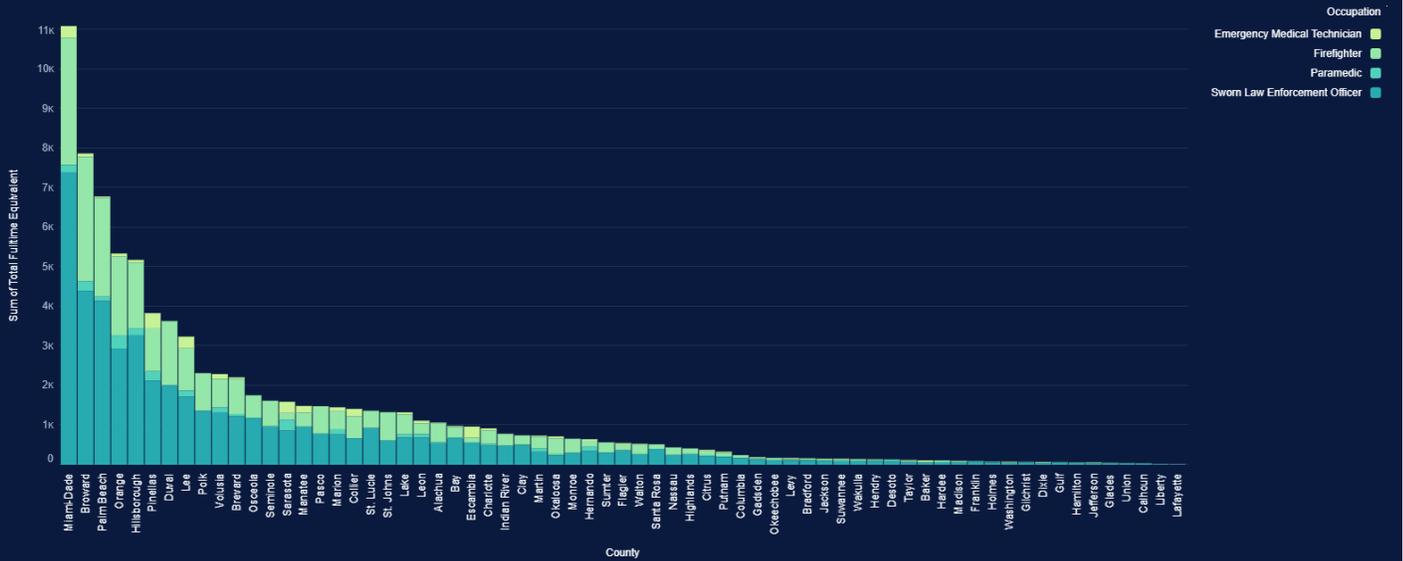


FTE by Type and County



May 31, 2022 4:42 PM - Viewing as Florida DEO

Employee Type and County



May 31, 2022 4:42 PM - Viewing as Florida DEO

<b>Surveyed Eligible First Responders Employed as of May 1, 2022</b>					
	<b>Total FTE Count 0.25</b>	<b>Total FTE Count 0.50</b>	<b>Total FTE Count 0.75</b>	<b>Total FTE Count 1.0</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Eligible First Responders</b>	393	845	302	83,920	<b>84,667</b>
<b>Dollar Amount Net of Taxes</b>	\$98,250	\$422,500	\$226,500	\$83,920,000	<b>\$84,667,250</b>
<b>*Employee FICA (7.65%), Employer FICA (7.65%) and Federal Income Tax (10%)</b>	\$33,283	\$143,126	\$76,732	\$28,429,578	<b>\$28,682,720</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$131,533</b>	<b>\$565,626</b>	<b>\$303,232</b>	<b>\$112,349,578</b>	<b>\$113,349,970</b>

\* DEO will send recognition payments to eligible first responders not to exceed \$1,000 net of estimated taxes. DEO will issue a detailed tax insert with each recognition payment and will send an appropriate tax form to each first responder who receives a recognition payment.

<b>Anticipated Project Cost</b>	
<b>Payments to First Responder</b>	\$113,349,970
<b>Contracted Personnel</b>	\$287,000
<b>Personnel Support Costs</b>	\$32,586
<b>System Enhancements, Check Printing, Postage, and Project Management &amp; Support</b>	\$1,600,000
<b>Indirect Rate 29.1134% of Total Personnel + fringe benefits</b>	\$83,555
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$115,353,111</b>

## Payment Processing

DEO will provide each PPC a payment template that is designed to gather all necessary information while incorporating quality assurance and grant documentation. To ensure an accurate allocation, local governments have submitted aggregate numbers of all eligible first responders in the survey discussed in the previous section. While employing agencies may be able to populate many of the payment template details with data from their own systems, the PPC will attest that the employee meets the eligibility criteria.

PPCs will submit and upload the completed payment template to a secure portal provided by DEO. This process will allow for faster processing of employee information and ensure timely payment. DEO will maintain the information securely, and personal contact information will not be distributed or shared. DEO takes the protection of Florida's essential first responders' personal information seriously. DEO will only request information necessary to process payments.

DEO will procure third-party vendors for a secure portal, check processing, and program support, which will include a call center for employing entities to receive assistance.

The secure portal that will be developed by a third-party vendor with the following features and benefits for employing agencies:

- Capability to upload eligible employee data necessary to issue an essential first responder recognition payment.
- Capability to electronically attest to the accuracy of the data as well as identify the address location that will be used for receiving printed checks before any payment is processed.
- Accessibility to program information, instructions, and templates.
- Ability for multiple types of users to have secure portal access:
  - Employing Agencies – approximately 800+ users will be provided access to upload eligible first responder recipient data files (CSV format).
  - DEO – users will be provided access to support employing agencies with answers to questions regarding the Program and their eligible first responder recipient data uploads using the secure portal.
- Data validation to ensure that records are complete and accurate.
  - Data validation will include identifying potential duplicate records, validating Program expenditure amounts to adhere to program guidelines, and responsibly serving eligible first responders that are employed with multiple employing agencies.
- Data encryption and user access controls will be enabled to secure and protect first responder

personal identifying information uploaded through the secure portal.

- Secure data transmission between the secure portal and all other third-party solutions procured by DEO to administer the Program. DEO's check processing vendor will utilize encryption and digital signatures with no data stored outside of the secure portal, DEO servers, or DEO's check processing solution.
- Real-time reporting to be used by both employing agencies and DEO to monitor payment requests and payment issuance.

All payments will be issued as paper checks and mailed directly to the employing agency's mailing address provided by the employing agency in the payment template. DEO will utilize a vendor to validate mailing addresses. Mailing address issues will be communicated back to the appropriate employing agency for resolution. It is important for employing agencies to provide complete and correct mailing address information to ensure timely payments.

Check processing services will be provided through a third-party banking entity. That entity, in collaboration with the secure portal vendor discussed above, must provide check processing services that:

- Utilize encryption and digital signatures with no data stored outside of the secure portal or the check processing solution.
- Provide a payment disbursement solution that integrates eligible recipient data with the banking institution to print, sort, and mail Program checks on schedule with the correct financial amounts.
- Print checks that include the following:
  - Recipient name;
  - Return address (unique PO Box address to be used for undeliverable mail);
  - Logo with Florida State Seal;
  - Governor DeSantis' digital signature;
  - DEO Secretary Dane Eagle's digital signature;
  - A payment stub; and
  - Encoding for bank account/payment details.
- Each eligible employee will receive a single envelope with:
  - One check addressed to the employee;
  - One insert letter from Governor DeSantis, tailored to essential first responders; and

- One insert providing tax handling information.
- Print checks within five days of receiving payment details from the secure portal.
- Mail all checks through a carrier mail service with a tracking number and provide the tracking number to DEO.

The checks should arrive at the employing agency's mailing address within three-to-five business days. DEO will monitor the delivery of the checks via the carrier service tracking numbers provided by the banking entity. If payment is not received by the employing agency after 10 business days, the employing agency may contact DEO directly at [RecognitionPayments@deo.myflorida.com](mailto:RecognitionPayments@deo.myflorida.com) or by calling the call center that will be established to support Program payment inquiries. DEO may assist with reissuing payment if the check is lost and has not been deposited. Employing agencies should also report fraud or stolen checks to DEO. DEO will work with any employing agency to resolve payment issues.