



Drones for First Responders (DFR) Pilot Program

Request for Application (RFA) Guidelines

Ohio Department of Transportation & DriveOhio

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1. DFR Pilot Program Overview

The Drones for First Responders (DFR) Pilot Program was established through Amended Substitute House Bill 96, signed into law on June 30, 2025, as part of Ohio's FY2026–27 Operating Budget. This state-funded initiative aims to accelerate the use of drone technology in public safety operations across Ohio.

1.1. DFR Pilot Program Goals

Led by the Ohio Department of Transportation's (ODOT) DriveOhio initiative, the DFR Pilot Program intends to support police, fire, sheriff, and EMS departments in deploying drones for emergency response. The goals of the program are as follows:

- Place DFR technology in hands of first responders across different types of organizations and different geographic classifications, and
- Maximize use of DFR technology to collect data and inform cost-benefit analysis.

2. Request for Applications (RFA) Overview

ODOT, through DriveOhio, is issuing this Request for Applications (RFA) to solicit participation from interested and eligible applicants in its DFR Pilot Program. It is anticipated that selected applicants will include a diverse mix of agencies across different geographical footprints in Ohio.

2.1. Eligibility and Funding

Approximately \$2.5 million has been allocated to support eligible public safety agencies in Ohio. Police, fire, sheriff, and EMS departments interested in building or expanding drone programs for first response are encouraged to apply.

Eligible applicants include first responders in:

- Counties
- Municipalities
- Townships

Selected applicants will be reimbursed for a Technical Package that includes hardware, software, training, and regulatory support. For more information, please reference Exhibit A (Technical Package) of Attachment A (Draft DFR Pilot Program Agreement).

2.2. RFA Schedule

Milestones related to the RFA are provided in Table 1 - RFA Schedule.

Table 1 - RFA Schedule

RFA Milestone	Schedule/Deadline
RFA Issue Date	November 5, 2025
Application Inquiry Period	November 5 – 19, 2025 @ 5 PM EST
Application Submission Deadline	November 26, 2025
Anticipated Selection Notifications	January 2026

3. Submission Guidelines & Questions

3.1. Submission Guidelines

1. Access the DFR Pilot Program Application Form on ODOT's website at drive.ohio.gov/DFR
2. Complete the application form online.
 - Fill out all required fields accurately.
 - Ensure that all personal, contact, and eligibility information is correct.
 - Please note that the form does not include a "save and continue" option.
3. Submit the completed application form.
 - After submitting the form, please ensure you get a completed submission confirmation screen.
 - Additionally, you will receive a confirmation email by ODOT within a week of your submission. If you don't, please contact us at uascenter@dot.ohio.gov.

3.2. Questions

For any questions or further information, please contact:

ODOT UAS Center
uascenter@dot.ohio.gov

Applicants shall include ***"DFR Pilot Program RFA Questions"*** in the subject line of the email and shall be submitted **by no later than 5 PM EST, November 19, 2025**.

Questions and associated responses will be posted anonymously here: drive.ohio.gov/DFR

The applicant shall not contact any other ODOT Office, including DriveOhio or ODOT District offices, for responses to questions and is responsible for monitoring the website for posted responses.

4. Evaluation and Selection Process

4.1. Evaluation Process Overview

ODOT aims to fairly evaluate and select applicants that align with the department's goals as noted in section 1.1. With that said, the evaluation and selection process will be as follows:

1. Evaluate applications against criteria outlined in Table 2.
2. Score applications based on scoring breakdown outlined in Table 2.
3. Shortlist of the highest scoring applications.
4. If necessary, ODOT reserves the right to interview shortlisted participants prior to final selection.

4.2. Evaluation Criteria & Scoring Breakdown

Table 2 outlines the evaluation criteria and scoring breakdown for submitted applications.

Table 2 - Application Evaluation Criteria & Scoring Breakdown

Scoring Element	Evaluation Criteria	Max Points
Program Goals and Objectives	The applicant should clearly identify and describe: • Current public safety challenges, • how the DFR Pilot Program will help achieve specific DFR goals and outcomes, • how the DFR Pilot Program measure effectiveness of the DFR program through performance metrics; and • how the DFR Pilot Program will align with and enhance their existing emergency response protocols.	25
Utilization and Staffing Capabilities	The applicant should clearly identify and describe: • if DFR technology will be a shared resource; and • current or planned staffing capabilities.	15
Maximum Score		40

4.3. Selection Announcements

Following selection, ODOT will notify each selected applicant and provide further instructions for next steps via email.

The results will also be announced in our website at: drive.ohio.gov/DFR.

5. Use of RFA Responses

By submitting a response, each applicant agrees that it will not bring any claim or have any cause of action against the State of Ohio or any employee of the State, based on misunderstanding concerning the information provided or concerning ODOT/DriveOhio's failure, negligent or otherwise, to provide the applicant with pertinent information as intended by this RFA.

Responses to this RFA are not offers and cannot be accepted by ODOT to form a binding contract. ODOT may contact an applicant to seek clarification and further discuss content described within their RFA response. The State of Ohio will not pay for any information requested nor is it liable for any cost incurred by the applicant.

ATTACHMENT A – Draft DFR Pilot Program Agreement

ODOT Agreement No. ____

**AGREEMENT
BETWEEN THE STATE OF OHIO,
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
AND **INSERT NAME OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, OHIO**
FOR DRONES FOR FIRST RESPONDERS PROGRAM**

This Agreement is made by and between the State of Ohio, Department of Transportation, 1980 West Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43223, acting by and through its Director, “ODOT” and the **Village/City/Township/County of insert, street address, City, Ohio ZIP**, “the LOCAL” and shall be referred to singularly as “Party” and collectively as “Parties”.

WHEREAS, the ODOT, has established a Drones for First Responders pilot program “DFR”, as provided by Section 755.20 of Am. Sub. H.B. No. 96 of the 136th General Assembly “the LEGISLATION”; and

WHEREAS, the LOCAL on behalf of their **insert name of the first responder department/division/office**, has applied for and been selected as a participant in the DFR; and

NOW THEREFORE, it is agreed by the Parties as follows:

1. OBLIGATIONS OF ODOT

- 1.1 ODOT, its contractor or agent, will assist the LOCAL with selecting the appropriate unmanned aerial vehicle system assets “UAS” and obtaining all required training for use in the DFR.
- 1.2 ODOT shall reimburse the LOCAL for the cost of the UAS, all required training, and any FAA approvals pursuant to section 4 of this Agreement.
- 1.3 ODOT, its contractor or agent, will obtain all applicable approvals from the Federal Aviation Administration for beyond visual line of sight operations for purposes of the DFR.
- 1.4 ODOT, its contractor or agent, will develop a comprehensive approach for community acceptance and integration of UAS operations and provide to the LOCAL for use in their community.

2. OBLIGATIONS OF THE LOCAL

- 2.1 The LOCAL will abide by all requirements, procedures, and guidance listed in the DFR Technical Package attached to this Agreement as Exhibit A which is expressly incorporated herein and made a part of this Agreement, and all references to this Agreement shall include the Exhibits.
- 2.2 The LOCAL agrees to select a vendor and purchase their UAS within ninety (90) days of the effective date of this Agreement.
- 2.3 The LOCAL, at its sole cost, will ensure there is an appropriate site for the UAS including power and security and indicated in Exhibit A.
- 2.4 The LOCAL agrees to purchase the UAS and pay directly for any additional necessary training and FAA approvals. The LOCAL agrees to be reimbursed for the cost of the UAS, all required training, and all FAA approvals pursuant to section 4 of this Agreement. The LOCAL agrees they will only be reimbursed for UAS purchased from vendors that meet the DFR requirements, as provided by the LEGISLATION, and all ODOT specifications listed in Exhibit A.
- 2.5 The LOCAL agrees that all participants in the DFR will complete all required training and assist in obtaining all FAA approvals.
- 2.6 The LOCAL agrees to sign the data collection agreement with ODOT's contractor to share data and metrics to assist ODOT in its integration of UAS into the statewide infrastructure.
- 2.7 The LOCAL will participate in DFR meetings with ODOT, its contractors or agents to track goals for reporting and operability.

3. TERM OF AGREEMENT

- 3.1 This Agreement shall commence on date of last signature below and shall expire June 30, 2027 unless terminated earlier pursuant to paragraph 5.6 of this Agreement.

4. REIMBURSEMENT

- 4.1 ODOT shall reimburse the LOCAL the actual cost of the UAS, all required training and all FAA approvals.
- 4.2 The LOCAL shall provide ODOT with a final cumulative invoice with all itemized receipts showing the details of the total cost of the UAS, all required training, and all FAA approvals. Reimbursement for the UAS, all training, and all FAA approvals shall be made in one payment to the LOCAL within thirty (30) days of receipt of a final cumulative invoice with all itemized receipts. The adequacy and sufficiency of a final cumulative invoice with all itemized receipts shall be determined solely by ODOT. If ODOT determines that a final cumulative invoice with all itemized receipts is inadequate or

insufficient, or determines that further documentation or clarification is required, the burden of providing the required information or documentation is on the LOCAL. ODOT shall notify the LOCAL in writing of the inadequacy or insufficiency and may provide any information necessary to correct the inadequacy or insufficiency. If such notification of inadequacy or insufficiency is sent, the required payment date shall be thirty (30) days after receipt of the corrected a final cumulative invoice with all itemized receipts.

- 4.3 Certification of Funds. It is expressly understood and agreed by the Parties that none of the rights, duties and obligations described under this Agreement shall be binding on either Party until all relevant statutory provisions of the Ohio Revised Code, including, but not limited to R.C. 126.07, have been complied with, and until such time as all necessary funds are available or encumbered and when required, such expenditure of funds is approved by the Controlling Board of the State of Ohio.

5. GENERAL PROVISIONS

- 5.1 This Agreement shall be to the benefit of and be binding upon the respective Parties herein, their successors and assigns. Nothing in this Agreement shall inure to the benefit of any third parties. Nothing stated in this Agreement shall act as a waiver of any immunities or defenses available to either Party, either by statute or common law.
- 5.2 Either Party may, at any time during the term of the Agreement, request amendments or modifications. Requests for amendments or modifications shall be in writing and shall specify the requested changes and the justifications for such changes. Should the Parties consent to modifications of the Agreement, then an amendment shall be drawn, approved and executed in the same manner as the original Agreement.
- 5.3 This Agreement shall be governed, construed and interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of Ohio. To the extent that the ODOT is a party to any litigation arising out of or relating in any way to this Agreement or the performance there under, such an action shall be brought only in a court of competent jurisdiction in Franklin County, Ohio pursuant to section 5501.22 of the Revised Code.
- 5.4 The State of Ohio and ODOT are self-insured.
- 5.5 ODOT, its employees, agents, and contractors are hereby released from any and all liability for damage or injury received by the LOCAL, its employees, agents or contractors while performing tasks, duties, work or responsibilities as set forth in this Agreement.
- 5.6 If the LOCAL breaches or defaults any of the terms or conditions of this Agreement, and if that breach is not remedied within thirty (30) days after written notification by ODOT of that breach or default, ODOT may terminate this Agreement.
- 5.7 ODOT and the LOCAL agree to make a good faith effort to resolve any disputes which may arise between them concerning interpretation of, or performance pursuant to, this

Agreement, with the exception of matters identified in this Agreement requiring approval solely and finally by ODOT.

- 5.8 Ohio Ethics Law: The LOCAL and ODOT, by signing this document, each certify: (1) it has reviewed and understands the Ohio Ethics law and conflict of interest laws as provided by Chapters 102 and 2921 of the Ohio Revised Code, and (2) will take no action inconsistent with those laws.
- 5.9 Except as expressly provided herein, neither Party shall have the right to bind or obligate the other Party in any manner without the other Party's prior written consent.
- 5.10 It is fully understood and agreed that the LOCAL nor its personnel shall at any time, or for any purpose, be considered agents, servants, or employees of ODOT or the State of Ohio, or public employees for the purpose of Ohio Public Employees Retirement Systems benefits. Nor shall this Agreement be construed as creating joint venture or partnership relationship of any kind between ODOT and LOCAL.

6. **NOTICE**

- 6.1 Notices under this Agreement shall be directed as follows:

Village/City/Township/County of XXX	Ohio Department of Transportation
Street address	DriveOhio/UAS Center
Village/City, Ohio ZIP	1323 West Blee Road, Room 3000
	Springfield, OH 45502

7. **SIGNATURES**

- 7.1 Any person executing this Agreement in a representative capacity hereby warrants that he/she has been duly authorized to execute this Agreement.
- 7.2 Any Party hereto may deliver a copy of its counterpart signature page to this Agreement via fax or email. Each Party shall be entitled to rely upon a facsimile or electronic signature of any other Party delivered in such a manner as if such signature were an original.

(the remainder of this page has been intentionally left blank)

The Parties hereunto have caused this Agreement to be executed by officials thereunto duly authorized as of the day and year last written below.

VILLAGE/CITY/TOWNSHIP/COUNTY OF XXX

By: _____

Printed Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

STATE OF OHIO
Department of Transportation

By: _____
Pamela Boratyn, Director

Date: _____



EXHIBIT A

Technical Package

Drones for First Responders (DFR) Pilot Program

Ohio Department of Transportation & DriveOhio

November 4, 2025

Overview of the Technical Package

What will be awarded for this pilot program:

The DFR Technical Package equips selected local governments (Awardees) with a turnkey, standards-aligned capability to plan, launch, and evaluate Drone-as-First Responder (DFR) operations. Each award will include an assortment of hardware, software, training, installation, and advisory support sufficient to achieve repeatable DFR launches and contribute data for statewide evaluation.

What's Included (scope may be tailored to site conditions):

1. Drone-in-a-Box (DIAB) System(s) & Installation

- Dock hardware, weather enclosure, controller hardware, and integration cabling.
- On-site setup/commissioning; initial acceptance testing; safety interlocks verification.
- Power/backhaul specifications finalized during pre-install review.

2. Integrated Aircraft Solution

- National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)-compliant aircraft compatible with DIAB system; aircraft manual and required registration documentation; mission accessories.
- Spare/backup batteries and charging equipment sized to expected launch tempo.

3. Training & Operational Templates

- Initial training (Part 107 intro or refresher, as needed), virtual DFR training, and standardized Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)/Concept of Operations (CONOPS) templates covering dispatch-to-launch, abnormal/emergency, data handling, and maintenance.

4. Software & Licenses (12-24 months)

- Mission planning, fleet management, telemetry logging, maintenance tracking, and records retention; integration support for Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD)/Real-Time Crime Center (RTCC) where feasible.
- Access to drone deconfliction and management services (e.g. Unmanned Aircraft System Traffic Management (UTM), Detect and Avoid (DAA)).

5. Community-Facing Transparency (Optional)

- Assistance to configure a public dashboard with non-sensitive indicators (e.g., launches by time window/zone), aligned to agency policy.

6. Regulatory/Authorization Support

- Advisory support and templates for FAA Certificates of Authorization (COAs)/waivers relevant to DFR missions (e.g., night, operations over people, and—where appropriate—Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS)), plus means-of-compliance guidance aligned with ODOT program materials.

Vendor Model

- **Vetted Vendors:** Prior to award, Applicants may be introduced to vetted suppliers and will participate in interviews to confirm vendor selections and fit. Final selections are subject to applicant procurement rules.

- Example vetted vendors - Skydio, BRINC, Parrot

Awardee Responsibilities

Site Readiness

Awardees must complete and meet pre-install conditions at each DIAB location. Vendor will coordinate installation after these conditions are met.

- Property use agreements and adequate permissions
- Approved local permits (as required)
- Level pad or suitable mounting surface (i.e. rooftop, concrete pad)
- Reliable electrical power (dedicated 20-amp, 120-volt circuit is a common and safe starting point for most installations, providing a total capacity of 2,400 watts)
- Internet/backhaul connectivity
- Secured access for equipment protection and maintenance

Training and Operational Integration

Prior to go-live, Awardees will: (a) designate qualified personnel (FAA certified Remote Pilot in Command -Part 107 as applicable), (b) complete included initial/virtual DFR training, and (c) adopt SOP/CONOPS templates for dispatch-to-launch workflows, abnormal/emergency procedures, and privacy/data handling. Initial training is typically scheduled alongside installation/acceptance.

Software, Data Handling, and Transparency

Provided software supports mission execution, telemetry capture, maintenance, and records. Adhere to use agreement terms for access to drone deconfliction and management services. If a public dashboard is selected, the applicant will configure it to publish approved, non-sensitive metrics consistent with policy.

Program Reporting and Coordination

To enable statewide evaluation, Awardees agree to:

- Share pilot / operations data during the estimated March 2026–June 2027 period (e.g., launch/dispatch/ clear times, call types, durations, outcomes) per ODOT formats/frequency, protecting sensitive information as required; and
- Share information on cost / benefits of DFR per ODOT formats/frequency, protecting sensitive information as required; and
- Participate in quarterly interchange meetings and additional interviews/site visits as reasonably requested to track goals and operability; and

- Assign one person to represent and onboard operator organization as part of the Share Airspace consortium, where active participation is optional; and
- Allowing sharing of aggregated operational conformance information with Share Airspace consortium.

Procurement and Timeline

Reimbursement eligibility requires the Awardee to initiate and complete procurement within ninety (90) days of award notice, including solicitations, approvals, purchase orders, and contract execution. Items not procured within this window may be deemed ineligible for reimbursement.