

# Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness Grant Program Best Practices Guide



## **Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA)**

### **Hazmat Grants Program**

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### **Developed in collaboration with the HMEP Working Group:**

- California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES)
- Nevada State Emergency Response Commission
- Nebraska Emergency Management Agency
- North Carolina Emergency Management Agency
- Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office



U.S. Department of Transportation

**Pipeline and Hazardous Materials  
Safety Administration**

## Introduction

Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) grants are used to develop, improve, and implement emergency plans, and train public sector hazardous materials (hazmat) response employees. This best practices guide was compiled, in part, by users of HMEP grants at the state and local levels, as well as grant administrators at PHMSA. The intent of this guide is to list examples of best practice projects from several grant recipient states that are within allowable costs as outlined by PHMSA. It also was established as a supplement for states attempting to acquire planning or training monies.

This guide does *not* supersede or replace expenditures guidance and should *not* be considered a replacement for activities in your application.

**Always seek guidance from your individual Grant Specialist for specific questions and activities related to your state or Native American Indian tribe. Examples within this guide may not apply to every user and should be considered as *examples* only, and include the following topics:**

- **Pre-award** — items occurring in the planning stages of the grant.
- **Post-award** — examples of projects completed after a Notice of Grant Award (NGA) has been signed.
- **Award Close-out** — activities that help states close out their grant.
- **Additional Guidance** — items not covered in a specific grant phase category.

## Best Practice Examples

### Pre-award

Activities that have aided states when creating a grant management plan.

**Sub-Award Applications** – Several states have created a sub-award notification to send to Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs). This allows the State Emergency Response Commission (SERC) and State Administrative Agency (SAA) to establish the amount requested by the LEPC and to plan accordingly when applying to PHMSA. In this notification, sub-grantees are made aware of the priorities for that funding year. Grant notifications can be sent to the LEPCs prior to the Federal award notification, which will allow the state a better idea of expected amounts requested by LEPCs. Example: “This year’s priority is to gain knowledge on commodity flow relating to crude oil transport.”

**Contingency Planning for Grant Dollars** – California’s HMEP grant application includes a list of contingencies for surplus monies USDOT may have following a grant cycle, thus, their plan has been reviewed and approved in advance. This contingency plan also allows the state to pick up a secondary project if one previously outlined in the application falls through.

**Other Pre-award Activities** – States are required to involve their SERC in creating and reviewing their HMEP application. States that involve their SERC in activities beyond what is required, such as those that use their SERC to help in hazmat planning, typically use a higher percentage of funds than those with SERCs not actively engaged in the process.

### Post-award

Activities that have helped states manage the grant and sub-award monies to LEPCs.

**Training Tracking** – Texas uses an on-line system “preparingtexas.org” to track classes, registrations, and certificate prerequisites that allows easier end-of-year reporting.

**Emergency Plans** – Emergency plans are being updated and revised nationwide using HMEP monies. For example, an LEPC in one state hires an outside contractor to develop or update its LEPC Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Plan. Another state uses HMEP monies for the salary of planning staff that help write emergency plans.

**Regional Projects** – States that use and develop regional projects (such as commodity flow studies, hazmat plan updates, and specialized hazmat training) were able to increase LEPC productivity and chemical awareness. For example, Region 7 EPA sponsors a four-state

regional conference where LEPCs and first responders gather to learn from their neighboring states. With prior approval from PHMSA, each state supports the conference using HMEP monies for conference registration fee and instructor/facilitator fees. California sponsors a portion of the audio-visual costs for two state-wide hazmat workshops each year, and provides funding for registration fees for LEPC members. Additionally, they are facilitating the contract for a state university to conduct a multi-year LEPC regional plan update effort.

**Final Reports** – PHMSA must report to Congress annually and pulls information from states’ final reports. States must complete the final report in its entirety. For that reason, it is important to establish effective sub-grantee monitoring practices.

**Sub-grantee Monitoring** – Best practices for monitoring sub-grantees include:

- Developing a detailed agreement that defines expectations and roles of both parties.
- Clarifying expectations on frequencies of reporting and other requirements.
- Identifying needs and investing time to orient and train sub-grantees; providing training on requirements consistently and continuously; and providing assistance as needed.
- Conducting continuous and scheduled monitoring using appropriate methods and tools.
- Checking for anything unallowable, unnecessary, or unsupported.
- Checking for non-compliance with grant and regulatory requirements, policies, and procedures.
- Checking for weaknesses that affect safeguarding of funds and grant compliance such as in systems, policies, procedures, and practices.

**Reimbursement Request** – Submitting reimbursement requests within 30 days of expenditures is fiscally responsible, and enables PHMSA to better monitor grantee use of funds.

**Soft Matches** – Examples include:

- Time attending conferences and trainings (though it cannot be used as a match if participant is being paid for attending training).
- Volunteer first responders’ attendance to an approved HMEP activity/project or training can be used as match (time should be based on a reasonable rate in which the grantee has determined by use of a formula or other method).
- Equipment donated by a third-party.
- With prior approval, program income, other than state hazmat fees, may be used to meet the cost sharing or matching requirement of the Federal award. The amount of the Federal award remains the same.
- ⊙ If an activity/project is unallowable under the HMEP Grant Program, then you are unable to use anything attached to it as a match.
- ⊙ State fees collected in reference to hazmat transportation are not allowed to be used as a match.

### **Award Close out**

Activities that have helped states close out their grant.

**Due Dates** – Establish due dates for subgrantees to complete activities and submit invoices to allow states to reallocate funds prior to close-out.

### Additional Guidance

**Combined Training Efforts** – Hazmat dispatch training, first responder awareness, and operations-level training are conducted in a one-week time frame. This allows more training to be offered in a shorter time period to a larger audience. Six weeks following initial training, a hazard analysis is conducted to assist in writing a hazard mitigation plan and discuss transportation surveys. Twelve weeks following the initial training, a first on-scene operations and site incident command training is offered. This is all concluded with a table top exercise and a revision of the response plan.

**Commodity Flow Studies** – Several grantees use commodity flow studies to determine the planning and training needs in their states. Studies can be focused on a small, rural area or a state-wide project similar to the project completed in 2014 by North Carolina, which was completed throughout a 5-year period.

**Conferences and Symposiums** – States have supported state-wide conferences and symposiums AND combined states' efforts to host multi-state conferences.

**Standard Operating Procedures** – Maintain institutional knowledge by creating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The SOPs should reflect the grantees internal controls as required by 2 CFR 200.303.

**Grants Management Training** – Key grantee officials (those responsible for submitting Financial Status Reports) partake in annual grant administration training covering financial and programmatic requirements as well as fraud awareness. This could be implemented via an on-line training program that should administer a follow-up test ensuring recipients' understanding of basic requirements, as well as tracking the recipient's training completion. This training is an allowable expense under the HMEP grant for key grantee officials.

**Public-Private Partnership** – Georgia has partnered with the Association of Fire Chiefs and the Public Safety Training Center to develop and deliver specialized pipeline emergency response training to first responders. Trainings are delivered to LEPCs across the state. HMEP monies may be used to support travel costs and Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) guidance.

**TRANSCAER™** – Allowable training that many states support. Costs could be accrued as an exercise expense and could include fuel, foam, etc.

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