



Everything You Want to Know About OSHA Safety Grants

Who is eligible: You must be an employer in the state of Minnesota, have been in business for at least two years and carry workers' compensation insurance.

How often are you eligible: You may receive grants every two years (assuming the program continues). So, if you received a grant in March 2010, they could apply again in May 2012 (2 years from when you completed the last grant).

What is covered by the grants: Any safety related project. It does not have to be specifically safety related--there may be things you were already looking to purchase that help solve a safety concern. Examples of projects that we have submitted:

- ergonomic fixes (chairs, desks, headsets, footrests)--this has been a little harder to get through
- electrical upgrades/fixes
- ventilation
- paint booth upgrades
- mechanical hoist
- AEDs
- security system
- forklift, lifting devices

Is it just one project: No. You can submit for as many items or different projects as you want. You can combine projects, to bring the total cost up. It just makes writing the grant a little more complicated (that is my issue).

How much is the grant: The awards are matching funds up to a maximum of \$10,000. So, if your project is \$18,000, you could get up to \$9,000. If your project is \$50,000, you can get up to \$10,000. OSHA has, in the past, given higher awards to more expensive projects (so they are paying less than half of the total project).

What if I get one bid and decide on something else: There is some flexibility, but you cannot change the project. So, you could apply for improved paint booth ventilation. Maybe when it comes time to buy the equipment, you determine that really you can get by with making upgrades to your existing booth, rather than buying a new booth, as the grant proposed. We ask OSHA for a change in the equipment, but the overall project stays the same. You can't change your mind and make electrical fixes instead of improving booth ventilation.

Another example: You say you are going to upgrade the paint booth ventilation. We use a quote from Global Finishing. When it comes time to purchase, you decide to go with Tecor for the ventilation changes. That is not a problem. Again, OSHA will pay half the cost, up to the \$10,000 (or whatever they award you).

What's the catch: It is not guaranteed that your grant will be awarded (although you can keep applying until it is, if you have the time). And, you cannot start the project (order the equipment) until you get the fully executed grant contract (which takes about 2 weeks from when you send in the signed contract). You have to pay for the equipment, submit bills to OSHA and they will send you the reimbursement check (which is the fastest part of the whole thing--only taking two weeks or less).

Deadlines: Grant applications received by February 10 will be awarded mid-March, for project completion by mid July; those received by April 10 should be awarded by mid-May for completion by mid-September. I will need the information about four weeks in advance of the deadline to get started on the grants--to start I just need quotes. Deadlines have been every two months.

How do they decide: OSHA will look at how many people are affected by the project, and how serious the hazard is, along with a few other factors. If there are a lot of applications, priority may be given to complete applications—no missing information, what falls within their strategic plan, and if the safety project will save lives.

What next: Decide what project(s) you want to do. I will let you know what is most likely to get funded if you are trying to decide among a couple of things. I will also send out a contract and a list of information I will need. Get the quotes and we get started (I set up a time to meet with you and get all the information I need to write the grant).

Other services CHESS offers:

MSDSLlinks: MSDS management system online. Annual subscription fee. Employees must have access to computers

Safety flash cards: monthly safety reminders that take less than five minutes to review. Available by email, individual flash cards for employees or posters. Annual subscription fee.

This article is intended to provide general information (not advice) about safety grants. This information is subject to change without notification. To discuss your specific concerns and how CHESS may help, please contact CHESS at 651-481-9787.

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