



CHESS, Inc.
33 E. Wentworth Ave., Suite 320
West St. Paul, MN 55118
Ph: 651-481-9787
Fax: 651-415-2886

Complete Health Environmental and Safety Services

EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT OSHA SAFETY GRANTS

CHESS has helped clients with over \$1 Million in grant awards!

Who is eligible? You must be an employer in the State of Minnesota and carry workers' compensation insurance.

How often you are eligible? Every three years. Although you can apply every two years (assuming the program continues), OSHA will dock points from your overall grant score if you have received a grant within the prior three years. So, if you were awarded a grant in March 2015, you should wait to apply again in April 2018 (three years from when your last grant contracts were fully executed).

What is covered by the grants? Any project intended to improve employee safety. It does not have to be specifically safety-related; there may be things you are already planning to purchase that would have a safety slant. Examples of projects have included:

- Paint booth upgrades
- Ergonomic fixes (lift tables, adjustable work surfaces for production areas, but not furniture)
- Electrical upgrades/fixes
- Ventilation systems
- Light curtains (machine guarding)
- Safer production equipment (press brakes, punch presses, etc.)

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, but it does make writing the grant more complicated.

How much is the grant? The awards are matching funds up to \$10,000. If your project is \$18,000, you can get up to \$9,000. If your project is \$50,000, you can get up to \$10,000. OSHA tends to give higher awards to more expensive projects (so they are paying less than half of the total project). OSHA also reserves the right to limit grant awards to less than \$10,000. Because of the strong competition, most grant awards have been for less than requested.

What if I get one bid and decide on something else? There is some flexibility, but you cannot change the overall project. One example: you apply for a new paint booth, but when it comes time to buy the equipment, you determine you can get by with making upgrades to your existing booth, rather than buying a new booth as the grant proposed. We can 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, for example.

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



What's the catch?

- There is no guarantee that your grant will be awarded (although you can keep applying until it is, if you can wait to start the project).
- It takes about six weeks from the time you submit the grant request until it is approved. But this time isn't set in stone. If OSHA is short on personnel or gets a lot of applications, it might take longer. Recently it has been less than four weeks.
- You cannot start the project (order the equipment) until you get the fully executed grant contract. This takes about two weeks from when you send in the signed contract.
- Once you have a contract, you have to pay for the equipment and submit bills to OSHA and they will send you the reimbursement check. Payment is the fastest part of the whole thing – only taking two weeks or less.
- If you receive a grant, you agree to allow OSHA Consultation to visit you if they choose to do so, to verify that the project was done and to do an inspection. If they find any violations they consider serious, you will need to correct those. You will not be fined or otherwise penalized providing you make the corrections. Assistance with a Consultation visit is a separate charge and not included in our grant writing fees.

Most of our grant recipients have not received OSHA Consultation visits. We don't know if you will or won't. Applying for a grant does not put you on OSHA's radar, and does not affect your chances for a visit from OSHA Enforcement.

Deadlines: Grant applications received by February 14 will be awarded mid-March, for project completion by mid-July; applications received by April 14 should be awarded by mid-May for completion by mid-September. If you want our assistance, we will need the information about four weeks in advance of the deadline to get started on the grants – to start we just need quotes. Deadlines have been every two months, but this is subject to change.

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

CHES's help: CHES can help prepare your grant request. We charge a flat fee of \$800 for our maintenance clients for this. We will usually need to do a site visit and discuss your needs with you. You'll have to have identified your project and obtained written vendor quotes. You may have to provide a letter from your bank showing bank approval if you are funding your project with a loan. We'll help with the rest.

While we've been quite successful in writing grant applications that are awarded, we can't guarantee that you'll receive a grant. You will have to pay us for our work even if your grant application is rejected.

Does CHES have much success? In 2014, ten out of 11 grants submitted by CHES got funded. That is about 8% of the total grant applications received by OSHA. Just looking at the manufacturing, warehousing, service and public employer grants that OSHA approved, over one-third were submitted with assistance from CHES, accounting for almost 40% of the funding. Grants are getting more competitive: in 2015, 13 out of 18 grant applications submitted by CHES were funded.



What's the process?

- a) You decide on a project and get quotes. Make sure you include contractor or installation costs.
- b) We set up a time to meet with you (or do a conference call) to gather the information needed to prepare the grant application. We will only write a limited number of grants each funding cycle, so we recommend you let us know early that you are interested in help with a grant.
- c) CHES prepares the grant application material and sends it to you for review. We may have you review the application online.
- d) Once you okay the application, we put together the supporting documents and submit the actual application online.
- e) You wait for an email letting you know if the grant was awarded.
- f) If the grant is awarded, you sign the State contracts and send them back to OSHA.
- g) Once OSHA sends the contracts back to you fully signed, you start your project (order your equipment, etc.).
- h) When you complete the project, you sign the form saying it is done, and send that with the receipts and pictures. Then you wait for your check.

Time line:

- We ask for at least 3-4 weeks to prepare the grant application.
- OSHA takes 6-8 weeks to review it.
- Contract signing takes about two weeks.
- Once you've submitted invoices, you get a check within about two weeks.

I'm interested. What next? Decide what project(s) you want to do. We can tell you what is most likely to get funded if you are trying to decide among several things. We will also send out a contract for our services and a list of information we will need.

Some of the information we will need, along with the quote:

- Company information (address, phone & fax numbers, email).
- Federal and State ID numbers.
- Unemployment insurance ID number.
- Workers' Compensation company and policy number.
- Whether permits are needed.
- Number of employees and departments/jobs.
- Injury information from last year, including average number of employees and total hours worked.

More information about grants is available on the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry website, <http://www.dli.mn.gov/WSC/Grants.asp>

If you want more information about how CHES can help you with a grant application, contact Carol Keyes at:

carkey@chess-safety.com or 651-481-9787 ext. 1

Other services CHES offers:

CHES specializes in providing comprehensive safety, health, and environmental consulting services to small businesses. We can help you with written programs, safety training, and OSHA compliance. Please see our website, www.chess-safety.com.