

BEST PRACTICES FOR PREPARING A Commercial Driver's License Program Implementation (CDLPI) Grant Application



U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Motor
Carrier Safety
Administration

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About the Grant Process

This document provides “best practices” for writing a Commercial Driver's License Program Implementation (CDLPI) grant application, covering application structure details and budget narratives.

CDLPI grants provide funding to help State Driver Licensing Agencies (SDLAs) support the [Commercial Driver's License \(CDL\) Programs](#) on a State and National level by increasing or maintaining their compliance with the CDL regulations in [49 CFR parts 383](#) and [384](#). Other eligible entities may also apply for CDLPI grant projects that will have a nationwide impact on improving the national CDL Program. The latest CDLPI Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) announcement on [Grants.gov](#) details additional priorities for the funding cycle.

1 | Application Overview

What is a Project and what must it include?

A project may consist of one or more priorities that work toward achieving a defined goal. An application for the CDLPI grant program may have up to four projects. If an applicant chooses to propose multiple projects within a single application, each project must contain:

- A distinct title.
- Separate and distinct project narratives.
- Separate and distinct budget narratives and line-item budgets. Applications with multiple budgets must include a comprehensive summary of the entire application's budget.



How should I structure my application?

Follow the NOFO for detailed structural requirements, such as font, type size, and page limitations. Direct any questions to the point of contact in the NOFO. See below for a high-level summary of the application structure.

A Project Narrative Includes:

- **Introduction:** Explain the project purpose and specific NOFO priority/priorities the project will address and organizational capacity. Describe how your organization has the expertise and partnerships to implement the strategies and achieve the goal(s) outlined in your application.
- **Problem Statement:** Provide a quantitative description of the issue the project will address, including baseline data and targeted outcome.
- **Performance Objective:** Describe the anticipated project outcome, using quantitative data as appropriate.
- **Performance Activity Plan:** Outline activities required to achieve the performance objective, including timeline(s) and performance benchmarks.
- **Performance Measurement Plan:** Explain how performance objective progress will be measured (hours, carrier contacts, number of drivers tested, conviction posting timeliness, etc.). Include key milestones and timelines. Include information about the outcomes that your application proposes to achieve using the requested funding.
- **Monitoring Plan:** Explain the method to monitor the project’s progress and success.

What You Need for Each Goal



A Budget Narrative Must:

- Be clear, specific, detailed, and mathematically correct.
- Explain the “what,” “how,” and “why” of a line-item cost to carry out grant project goals and objectives.
- Show how costs are allowable, allocable, reasonable, and necessary. The justification must show a direct link to the project’s success. If replacing equipment or technology, always reference your agency’s replacement schedule to include age and/or miles.
- Show how costs are calculated.

Provide a sufficient level of detail in the budget narrative to support the requested funding. Include descriptions by budget category (refer to [Standard Form 42A](#) “object class” categories) that clearly support the project plan by detailing the costs necessary to achieve the project’s proposed goals and objectives. The budget narrative section of the application demonstrates that the applicant has the expertise to successfully implement the stated strategies and achieve its stated goal(s).

Note: The below sections will cover the required components of the CDLPI grant application in more detail.



2 | Project/Budget Narrative Development

Brief Introduction

↳ Example: Introduction

This application's goal is to remove barriers to compliance with 49 CFR Parts 383 and 384 to maintain a status of zero open findings in the State Compliance Records Enterprise (SCORE) system. While currently the State has a status of zero SCORE findings, there is room for improvement by reducing the potential for fraud and unqualified drivers being issued a CDL by ensuring continued accurate, complete, and timely CDL data.

Applicants that received previous CDLPI funding should provide the following:

- A brief list of all open CDLPI Grant awards and how this application's requested funding supports those grants without duplicating costs or activities; and
- A brief narrative about operational obstacles they encountered that may have prevented them from meeting approved performance metrics and how these same obstacles will be overcome.

Self Assessment/Organizational Capacity

- Applicants must provide information on their organization's ability to manage the grant award. This should include any relevant experiences (e.g., open/closed grant awards), and the support they have to effectively manage the grant and achieve the proposed objectives.

Applications that fail to include the required information will be considered incomplete and risk disqualification.

- The Program Overview is not a comprehensive description or history of the applicant's entire CDL program or an acceptable substitute for the compliance plan mandated by MAP 21 § 32305.
- Applications from SDLAs must specifically include a CDL Program Self-Assessment, which may be included as part of the project's program overview or project plan; a separate, standalone document is not required.
- The CDL Program Self-Assessment is a summary of the key elements of the applicant's program and must include the following three components:
 - ▶ A list of all open findings in the State Compliance Records Enterprise (SCORE) System, including the finding's citation and a brief description; the reason for the finding; the proposed resolution; and the expected date by which the finding will be closed.
 - ▶ A list of all open CDLPI Grant awards, including award number; award amount; purpose; progress made to date in achieving the award's objectives; remaining unexpended funding; the expected date of completion; and how the application's requested funding supports those grants without duplicating costs or activities.
 - ▶ The total number of noncommercial licenses and the total number of CDLs—and Commercial Learner's Permits (CLPs)—issued, year to date and annually, listed separately by type of CLP or CDL.

Problem Statement

Describe the application goals and the applicable priorities met by the application's projects. Include a quantifiable description of the identified problem and details on the data used to identify the problem and establish the baseline. The data should support the proposed project. The applicant should include the data source and date and explain how they collect, maintain, and analyze the data.



↳ **Example: Problem Statement**

The applicant proposes to implement strategies that remove barriers to compliance and improve customer confidence to ensure accuracy, completeness, and timeliness of CDL data and to sustain a status of zero open findings in SCORE.

Specifically, this application requests funding to expand the existing suite of online services to add functionality to assist with identification of CDL duplicates, driver address changes, license reinstatement, and calendar reminders about the approaching expiration of the driver’s current medical certificate and/or medical variances. A successful pilot at the applicant’s expense has confirmed that this approach reduces the potential for fraud or the issuance of a CDL to an unqualified driver. *[Insert metrics supporting this claim and list source.]*

Performance Objective



Goals should be S.M.A.R.T.

S

Specific

M

Measurable

A

Achievable

R

Relevant

T

Time-Bound

Include a description of the applicant’s quantifiable goal related to the problem statement.

This can be measured in:

- Numbers
- Percentages
- Other forms that accurately measure the outputs and outcomes that the applicant anticipates will result from implementing the strategies and activities proposed.

↳ **Example: Performance Objective**

This application’s performance objective is strengthening CDL program control and oversight to ensure continued compliance with all current program requirements by purchasing and installing approximately 15 Motion Computer Scoring Tablets. This technology will limit each examiner to a unique ID and use GPS to record and log the comprehensiveness and thoroughness of the required CDL road test. These capabilities are both considered best practices to detect and prevent fraud.

Performance Activity Plan

Provide a description of activities the applicant believes will mitigate the problem and include details, such as the number and frequency of activities.

↳ **Example: Performance Activity Plan**

Expand the program to automate pre-trip, basic control skills, and road test scoring for all mid- to high-volume testers/examiners (individuals conducting 50 or more CDL skills tests annually) by purchasing approximately 15 tablets, providing training in using the devices, and coordinating with the vendor to ensure that test results can be successfully transmitted.



Performance Measurement Plan

Write how performance goals and objectives will be measured, using quantifiable and measurable outputs (hours, carrier contacts, number of drivers tested, conviction posting timeliness, etc.).

Measures must include specific benchmarks and timelines that can be reported in quarterly progress reports and as annual outcomes. These should include all activities listed in the project plan.

↳ Example: Performance Measurement Plan

The applicant will monitor and report on a quarterly basis the number of tablets purchased, number deployed, and the percentage of mid- to high-volume examiners whose tests are performed using automated scoring devices.

The applicant will track the number of errors using these tablets compared to the errors prior to tablet usage. The applicant will report if unscheduled examiner audits increased by 10 percent as compared to the previous 12-month period and report the actual percentage achieved.

The applicant will provide status updates through quarterly progress and financial reports. The applicant will also provide a final report that includes a process evaluation describing how the project was conducted as well as if and how it met the desired objectives.

Monitoring Plan

Describe the method for the ongoing monitoring of project process, including who will conduct the monitoring, the frequency with which it will be completed, and how and to whom reports will be made. Include timelines and milestones, as appropriate.

↳ Example: Monitoring Plan

The State CDL Program Manager will be responsible for the continued monitoring and evaluation of the project.

The program manager will analyze monthly reports against the data from the prior month and submit these reports quarterly and annually to FMCSA. A final evaluation will look at the overall effect of the program on the timeliness and accuracy of the data and the number of fraud cases by looking at *[insert report]*. The program manager will also continue to monitor open findings in SCORE. This evaluation will continue beyond the lifecycle of the grant to help inform decisions on other areas for improvement to aid compliance with 49 CFR Parts 383 and 384.

Budget Narrative

Describe the costs necessary to achieve the proposed project goals and objectives, organized by budget category (also known as "object class"). Object classes include:

- **Personnel:** Salaries for employees working directly on a grant project. Only include costs for personnel employed by your organization. Individuals not employed by your organization will be classified as either a subrecipient or contractor (see "Contractual" object class, below).
- **Fringe Benefits:** Allowances and services provided by employers to their employees as compensation in addition to regular salaries and wages, such as the costs of leave (vacation, family-related, sick, or military), employee insurance, pensions, and unemployment benefit plans.
- **Travel:** Travel costs for employees include field work activities or travel to professional meetings.
- **Equipment:** Tangible personal property with a useful life of more than one year and a unit acquisition cost of the lesser of the capitalization threshold established by the non-Federal entity or \$10,000.
- **Supplies:** Tangible personal property other than equipment.
- **Contractual:** Contract/legal instrument by which a recipient purchases products or services necessary to carry out the Federal project.



- **Other:** Costs that do not fit within any of the other object class categories, such as rent for space used to conduct occasional project activities, leases, conference registration expenses, professional services (consultants), and printing costs.
- **Indirect Costs:** Costs incurred for common or joint objectives that benefit more than one project but are not easily or accurately allocable to more than one project.

Refer to the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR Part 200) for specific cost guidance, such as what constitutes allocable, allowable, necessary, and reasonable costs.

Example: Cost Element

 **Supplies Cost Budget Narrative (SF-424A, Line 6e)**

Item Name	Number of Units	Unit of Measurement	Cost per Unit	Total Cost
Mobile Printers	7	Item	\$250	\$1,750
Laptop Computers	12	Item	\$2,000	\$24,000
Subtotal Supplies				\$25,750

Twelve part-time staff require new laptop computers, and seven full-time staff require new mobile printers to complete this grant’s activities. The additional laptops and mobile printers are requested for replacement purposes.

 **Grant Application Tips**

- Visit the [Grants Resource Center](#) for training and tools to help you apply for and maintain CDLPI grants.
- Review the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to ensure that your project goals support the national priorities. Last year’s NOFOs are posted on Grants.gov for your reference. The Assistance Listing number is 20.232.
- Be careful when copying from a previous application, as requirements might have changed from the previous NOFO.
- Attend the CDLPI and CMVOST Funding Conference and/or review the recording of the Funding Conference and associated FAQs. Send any additional questions to the point of contact listed in the NOFO.
- Contact the FMCSA Office of Civil Rights to obtain approval of the current year’s Title VI Compliance Plan and Assurances.
- Use the checklist in the NOFO to prepare all required materials prior to submission.
- Use the budget template that is provided in the NOFO. The budget template can be found under the “related documents” tab on Grants.gov. Even if you decide not to use it, it can still help account for the requirements that are conveniently captured in the template.
- Ask someone who was not involved in developing the application to review it. Provide this editor/reviewer with a copy of the NOFO to help them ensure the application meets all requirements.
- Complete and upload all forms required by the NOFO to Grants.gov by the due date.



- Attachments should be submitted in Grants.gov with the application package. While supplemental attachments are allowed, the application's project and budget narratives must include all required information. The narrative must indicate when a supplemental attachment needs to be referenced.
- Upload your application to Grants.gov well before the due date to account for any technical challenges that may arise. After uploading your application package, you will receive two emails within two business days:
 - ▶ A confirmation of application receipt from the Grants.gov system.
 - ▶ An email indicating that the application was either successfully validated by Grants.gov prior to transmission to FMCSA, or rejected due to errors.

Help

Questions?

Should you have any questions, please email Grants@dot.gov or your Field Office Point of Contact.

Additional Resources

Visit FMCSA's [Grants Management Training page](#) for additional resources and links to the Grants Management eLearning Series or the [CDLPI grant page](#) for information on CDLPI.

Grants Toolkit

Turn your ideas into safety solutions. The [FMCSA Discretionary Grant Toolkit](#) offers in-depth information on how to apply and manage FMCSA discretionary grants.