



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

# FMCSA DISCRETIONARY GRANT TOOLKIT



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**Turn Your Ideas Into Safety Solutions:** How to Apply for and Manage FMCSA Discretionary Grants

## About the Toolkit

At FMCSA, we understand we cannot reach our goal of reducing crashes, injuries, and fatalities involving commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) alone. Partnering with organizations that share our safety mission helps us reach more motor carriers and drivers, increasing our capacity and amplifying our impact nationwide.

If you have an idea for a project to improve CMV safety, we want to hear from you!

Grant funding is available for a wide variety of institutions and activities. Previously funded projects have included research projects, hiring personnel to implement CMV safety programs, training on regulatory requirements, technology improvements, commercial driver's license enhancements, and more.

### If you have a great idea, read on!

This toolkit will help you research and prepare a competitive grant application. We look forward to hearing from you.

## Additional Resources

### GRANTS MANAGEMENT TRAINING

<https://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/Grants/GrantManagement.aspx>

This in-depth eLearning series developed by FMCSA offers a self-paced training on the grant application and management process. You can take the full course, start to finish, or focus on the specific sections you need help with. The full training course takes approximately 2 hours to complete.

### GRANTS RESOURCE CENTER

<https://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/Grants/ResourceCenter>

FMCSA has centralized all resources for grant applicants in one online location. Search by grant, topic, resource type, and year to drill down to the information you need.

### GRANTS.GOV LEARNING CENTER

<https://grants.gov/learn-grants>

The Grants Learning Center is your gateway to the Federal grants world. Access articles and trainings from Grants.gov.

# ABOUT FMCSA DISCRETIONARY GRANTS

## Know Your Requirements

While FMCSA provides this toolkit as a helpful resource, remember that grant applicants and recipients are responsible for understanding and meeting all requirements in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) title 2, part 200 ([Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#)).

## What is a discretionary grant?

Discretionary grants are competitive grants, meaning applications are evaluated and recipients are awarded full or partial funding based on merit. FMCSA grants adhere to an established Federal grant funding process designed to serve America's public interest and ensure that competitions are open and fair. No applicant is guaranteed funding from a discretionary grant.

## What are FMCSA's discretionary grant programs?

The FMCSA discretionary grant programs are listed below. Click on the links below to access grant-specific information and resources.




### High Priority (HP) Grants

Learn more about the HP Grants 

<https://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/Grants/HighPriority.aspx>




### Commercial Driver's License Program Implementation (CDLPI) Grant

Learn more about the CDLPI Grant 

<https://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/Grants/CDLPI.aspx>



### Commercial Motor Vehicle Operator Safety Training (CMVOST) Grant

Learn more about the CMVOST Grant 

<https://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/Grants/CMVOST.aspx>

# GRANTS LIFECYCLE

The contents of this toolkit align with the timeline for the grant funding process, known as the grants lifecycle.

**The FMCSA grants lifecycle consists of three main phases: Pre-Award, Award, and Post-Award.**

The FMCSA grants lifecycle is a structured process designed to ensure that funds are used efficiently to improve motor carrier safety, operations, and compliance. Each stage—from application to closure—helps ensure the effectiveness and accountability of these safety programs.



## Pre-Award Phase

### GRANT APPLICANTS

review funding opportunities, once published by FMCSA, and prepare applications.



## Award Phase

### FMCSA

reviews applications, then selects and notifies award recipients.



## Post-Award Phase

### GRANT RECIPIENTS

accept award, implement and monitor project, and close out grant.

# IN THIS TOOLKIT

Entities that apply for and receive grants complete actions in the pre-award and post-award phases of the grants lifecycle.

## CHAPTER 1

### FMCSA GRANT APPLICATION CHECKLIST PRE-AWARD PHASE

Use this checklist throughout the process of planning and submitting your FMCSA discretionary grant application.

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## CHAPTER 2

### FMCSA GRANT MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST POST-AWARD PHASE

Use this checklist to keep track of the administrative requirements included in implementing, monitoring, and closing out your grant-funded project.

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## CHAPTER 1

# Grant Application Checklist

## Pre-Award Phase

This chapter will walk you through the following steps:

- 1 Register your entity with the Federal government.
- 2 Learn about the application process.
- 3 Identify the FMCSA priorities your project will address.
- 4 Read and understand the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).
- 5 Create your application.
- 6 Make sure your application is complete and meets all requirements.
- 7 Submit your application.

# 1

## Grant Application Checklist Pre-Award Phase



### KEEP IN MIND

Start early!

The application process may take 2–3 months and lots of teamwork. Deadlines are firm. Don't wait for the grant to be posted to start the application process.

Check off each task as you work to complete your grant application.

### Before You Proceed: Are You Eligible?

FMCSA grant funding is available to specific entities, including colleges and universities, State governments, training providers, nonprofit organizations, and more. Goals, criteria, and eligibility differ for each grant program. Individuals are not eligible.

To learn more about the grant programs, including which entities are eligible for each, visit the FMCSA Grants website at <https://ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/Grants/default.aspx>.

### STEP 1 Register your entity with the Federal government. No fees required.

#### ✓ Register for SAM.gov or renew SAM.gov registration. (Must be renewed annually.)



May take 10–15 business days to process

The System for Award Management, known as [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov), is the government website where entities register to do business with the U.S. government. FMCSA grant applicants must register using their Employer Identification Number (EIN) and request a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

You may need to submit several legal documents, including a notarized letter, certifications, and representations. Learn more and get started on [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).

#### ✓ Create your account on Grants.gov.



May take 2–4 weeks to process

[Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) is the government website you will use to view grant opportunities and submit your grant application by setting up a [Workspace](https://grants.gov). Be sure to use the same email address used in SAM.gov for EBiz POC (Point of Contact). Once your account is created, add an Organization Applicant profile using the UEI obtained from SAM.gov.

**PLAN AHEAD!** Make sure you leave enough time for these registration processes so you do not miss the application deadline.

## Pre-Award Phase FMCSA Grant Application Checklist Continued

### STEP 2 Learn about the application process.

Participate in or watch FMCSA's Technical Assistance webinars.

Topics include application process, non-discrimination requirements, and grant-specific details. Visit the [FMCSA Grants](#) website to sign up to receive notifications for the live events. Recordings are also [posted online](#).



### STEP 3 Identify the FMCSA priorities your project will address.

Review FMCSA priorities.

Determine how your project(s) align with FMCSA's mission and U.S. DOT's strategic goals. The most competitive applications are those that can clearly demonstrate how the proposed project supports one or more of these goals or strategies.

#### About FMCSA

FMCSA's primary mission is to prevent crashes, fatalities, and injuries involving large trucks and buses. FMCSA:

- Develops safety and regulatory standards for commercial driver's licenses.
- Analyzes data and sponsors research.
- Conducts enforcement and education.
- Partners with nonprofit organizations, local and State governments, and other stakeholders to support innovative commercial driver training, safety inspections, and enhanced compliance and enforcement initiatives.
- Provides education on household goods consumer protection and conducts enforcement to protect consumers.



#### KEEP IN MIND

Consider reviewing funding summaries of awarded projects from previous years.

Each year, FMCSA publishes a complete list of projects that received funding. Review these summaries to gain insight into how previous submissions were able to align projects with FMCSA priorities.

Funding summaries are available in the [Grants Resource Center](#).

# Pre-Award Phase FMCSA Grant Application Checklist Continued

## STEP 4 Read and understand the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

### ✓ Download the NOFO when published on Grants.gov.

The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is the official document providing all the details of that year’s grant program, including eligibility, priorities, application requirements and deadline, and more.

 The deadline for applications is usually **45–60 days** after the NOFO is published.

Sign up to receive notifications from FMCSA when the NOFOs are published. You can also get a head start by reviewing the previous year’s NOFO on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), which is likely to be very similar.

### ✓ Participate in the FMCSA Funding Conference.

Hosted for each grant program, these webinars help potential grant applicants get all the information they need to submit a complete application. This is a great opportunity to ask FMCSA staff your questions about the application structure, project eligibility, or the application process before you submit your application.

These conferences are held annually, usually right after the NOFOs are published. Visit the [FMCSA Grants](https://www.fmcsa.gov/grants) website to sign up to receive notifications for the live events. Recordings are also [posted online](#).



### KEEP IN MIND

**When in doubt,  
read the NOFO!**

Have questions about font? Type size? Page limits? All these details and more are in the grant NOFO. Make sure you read it carefully in its entirety and refer back to it frequently throughout your grant writing process. Reach out to the contact listed in the NOFO if you have questions.



## Pre-Award Phase FMCSA Grant Application Checklist Continued

### STEP 5 Create your application.

#### ✔ Write your application.

A well-written, complete application describes the CMV safety challenge you are facing, how your proposed project will address that challenge, and how this aligns with FMCSA's priorities.

The application must be a performance-based plan, meaning it will state the problem you intend to solve, specific performance objectives for resolving the problem, and measurable outputs and outcomes you will use to track effectiveness. Include data to support your plan, and always cite your data sources.

#### ✔ Get your forms in order.

Learn more and download PDF versions of forms, at <https://www.grants.gov/forms>. Compile the information needed to complete all the required forms.

##### These may include:

- Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
- Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424A)
- Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)
- Certification Regarding Lobbying
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL)
- Key Contacts

Some grant programs may require additional forms.



### KEEP IN MIND

**Don't come up with your own format! All grant applications follow the same structure to streamline the review process.**

All discretionary grants are required to follow a similar structure with specific sections, such as:

- Introduction
- Problem Statement
- Performance Objective
- Program Activity Plan
- Performance Measurement Plan
- Monitoring Plan
- Budget Narrative

Read the grant NOFO for full details on how your grant application must be structured.

FMCSA also provides best practices on writing an application. Guides are available for each grant program. Visit the [FMCSA Grants website](#) to access these resources.

## Pre-Award Phase FMCSA Grant Application Checklist Continued

### ✓ Determine if you will need an IDC agreement.

An IDC agreement is needed if your project's budget will include indirect costs (IDCs). IDCs are incurred for a common or joint (non-direct) purpose of benefiting more than one cost objective and not readily assignable to the other cost objectives. IDCs may be administrative or operational costs, such as office utilities. For more information on IDCs, see the NOFO.

### ✓ Understand and complete the Title VI/Non-Discrimination Program Assurance Plan documents

All grant applicants must ensure that their projects comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Grant applications must include:

- Title VI Program Compliance Plan, approved by FMCSA's Office of Civil Rights.
- Title VI Program Assurance for current fiscal year.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits any program or activity that receives Federal financial assistance from discriminating on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, low income, or limited English proficiency.

To avoid delays in the approval process, new applicants should contact FMCSA's Office of Civil Rights at [FMCSATitleVI@dot.gov](mailto:FMCSATitleVI@dot.gov) to discuss the Title VI Plan requirements before applying.

Returning applicants are encouraged to submit their draft plan or previously approved plan to [FMCSATitleVI@dot.gov](mailto:FMCSATitleVI@dot.gov) before submitting their grant application to determine if any updates are needed.



### KEEP IN MIND

Consider previous years' comments and feedback from reviewers.

If you applied for FMCSA grants before plan ahead to address feedback from previous submissions. FMCSA provides feedback whether or not a grant was awarded; check your correspondence.

## Pre-Award Phase FMCSA Grant Application Checklist Continued

### STEP 6 Make sure your application is complete and meets all requirements.

- ✓ Refer to the NOFO for a list of the criteria FMCSA will consider when reviewing applications.

Don't get disqualified due to an oversight—make sure you meet all the listed criteria!



#### KEEP IN MIND

**Proofread and check the math!**

A math error or spelling mistake can undermine your credibility. Consider having someone outside your organization read your proposal to ensure it is easily understood.

### STEP 7 Submit your application.

**Pay close attention to the deadline!** Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

- ✓ Upload all required documents to Grants.gov.

Some forms may be completed in Grants.gov. Learn more at <https://www.grants.gov/forms>.

- ✓ Confirm your submission.

When submitting your application, ensure that you get two email confirmations from Grants.gov to validate the submission.

All applications are reviewed by FMCSA for statutory and regulatory compliance, programmatic value, financial soundness, and potential for success. This typically includes:

- Initial screening to ensure application is complete and eligible.
- Programmatic review and assessment of the application substance.
- Financial review of proposed budgets.



#### Track your Application

While awaiting FMCSA's decision, you can [track your status](#).

## CHAPTER 2

# Grant Management Checklist

## Post-Award Phase

This chapter will walk you through the following steps:

- 1 Access GrantSolutions.
- 2 Accept the grant.
- 3 Connect with FMCSA personnel.
- 4 Implement and monitor your project.
- 5 Complete required forms and reports.
- 6 Notify FMCSA about any changes.
- 7 Close out the grant(s).
- 8 Retain your records.

# 2

## Grant Management Checklist Post-Award Phase



### KEEP IN MIND

Stay organized and on schedule.

Review grant terms, track progress, and submit reports on time to stay compliant and avoid funding delays.

Check off each task as you work to monitor your grant.

## Congratulations on being awarded an FMCSA grant!

We are excited to partner with you to improve highway safety.

Grant recipients are required to complete several steps throughout the grant period of performance (POP) to ensure funds are being handled legally and responsibly. This is a high-level summary of the grant management process, however grant recipients are responsible for meeting all their requirements and should refer to the Terms and Conditions/Notice of Grant Agreement (NGA) for full details.

**Managing Multiple Grants:** If you have received multiple FMCSA awards, your grants likely have different timelines. Refer to your POP to keep track of where you are within the lifecycle for each grant.

### STEP 1 Access GrantSolutions.

GrantSolutions is a web system designed to support the grant management process.

[GrantSolutions](#) imports information from Grants.gov so you don't have to enter it a second time.

- ✓ **Make sure your GrantSolutions account is up to date.**
  - If this is the first time your organization has received an FMCSA grant award, you will need to request an account in GrantSolutions for your organization. This account may have multiple users. Once your account is created, you will receive a confirmation email with login instructions.
  - For new and returning grantees, make sure you list the correct Authorized Organization Representative. This must be the user that has the authority to enter into agreements on behalf of the organization.

## Post-Award Phase Grant Management Checklist Continued

### STEP 2 Accept the grant.

**Log in to GrantSolutions to accept your award.**

The user listed as your Authorized Organization Official will receive an email from GrantSolutions when the grant is ready to be reviewed and accepted. Acceptance requires an electronic signature.

Accepting the Terms and Conditions is legally binding. Be sure to carefully review and make sure you understand all terms and conditions before accepting the award. If you have any questions about the document, you may contact your FMCSA contact (see below) or the [GrantSolutions Help Desk](#).



#### KEEP IN MIND

Read the full agreement carefully before you sign!

The signature line may be on the front page, but it applies to the full document. Read all the terms before you sign them.

### STEP 3 Connect with FMCSA personnel.

FMCSA has dedicated personnel in each State and at FMCSA Headquarters to work with grant recipients and help you manage your grant funding. Personnel roles include:

FMCSA Division Office Staff	FMCSA Grant Program Office	FMCSA Grants Management Office (GMO)
FMCSA employees who oversee how States manage Federal grant funds. Includes the State Program Specialist (SPS), Division Administrator (DA), and State Programs Manager (SPM). Find your Division Office at <a href="https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/mission/field-offices">https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/mission/field-offices</a> .	Personnel at FMCSA Headquarters who receive funding allotments and provide guidance and oversight on grant programs. Program Office contact information is included in the NOFO.	Office responsible for fiscal and business management, and administrative issues relating to the specific grant, execution of all grant amendments, signing the grant agreement, and maintaining GrantSolutions.gov.

**Stay in touch**

Be sure to respond promptly to any messages from the contacts above, and don't hesitate to reach out to your FMCSA point of contact at any time with questions or concerns. Constant communication is key!

## Post-Award Phase Grant Management Checklist Continued

### STEP 4 Implement and monitor your project.

#### ✓ Establish a monitoring plan.

While FMCSA conducts formal monitoring (Onsite Monitoring and Basic Mandatory Monitoring), the grant recipient is also required to conduct its own internal monitoring throughout the POP. This should include monitoring any performance measures laid out in the grant application. This also includes monitoring any subrecipients you may work with to complete your project goals.

### STEP 5 Complete required forms and reports.

#### ✓ The required forms are:

Form Name	Purpose/Frequency	How to Submit
Performance Progress Report (PPR)	Quarterly update on grant activities, related to the funding expended.	Submit in GrantSolutions
Standard Form 425 (SF-425), also known as a Federal Financial Report (FFR)	Quarterly report of financial information. Subject to review and approval.	Complete and submit in GrantSolutions
Request for Advance or Reimbursement (SF-270)	Use to request reimbursement for expenses related to fulfilling grant objectives. Subject to review and approval. Submit at least quarterly.	Submit through <a href="#">Delphi</a> (access required)

*Other forms and reports may be required, refer to your Terms and Conditions/INGA for more information.*

#### Will I be audited?

An entity must undergo a single agency audit if it spends more than \$1,000,000 of Federal money in one year. This includes all Federal funding, not just funding from FMCSA grant programs. For more information, visit the [Federal Audit Clearinghouse](#).

## Post-Award Phase Grant Management Checklist Continued

### STEP 6 Notify FMCSA about any changes.

Request amendments, as needed.

FMCSA understands that, once a project is set in motion, you may encounter things you didn't expect and may need to adjust your plan accordingly. If you need to make a change, this is called an "amendment." Amendments are subject to approval.

TYPES OF AMENDMENTS		
Budget modification	Modification of project scope and activities	No-cost extension
Revision of your project budget that results in more than 10% cumulative deviation from the total approved budget. This is the most frequent type of amendment.	Notifies FMCSA if the scope of the project has changed from the plan outlined in the original awarded application. Scope changes may require GMO approval.	Request to extend the POP beyond the established end date of the award. You must provide a credible justification, such as an outage of a critical system. "We just need more time" is not justification for an extension.



#### KEEP IN MIND

Request amendments early and document all changes.

If you need to make changes to your FMCSA grant, submit amendment requests as early as possible to allow time for review and approval, as this can help avoid delays in your project.

When submitting an amendment for your FMCSA grant, clearly document the reason for the change and how it impacts the project to ensure a smooth approval process.

# Post-Award Phase Grant Management Checklist Continued

## STEP 7 Close out the grant.

Closing out your grant is an essential step that ensures you have fulfilled all your legal obligations regarding your grant funding. Closing out allows FMCSA to de-obligate, or take back, funding that was not spent during the project POP. It also gives FMCSA valuable information that helps the Agency continue funding future projects.

**Close out the grant.**

FMCSA will notify you about the close-out 90 days before your grant POP ends.

**Make sure you have all the documents needed for your close-out package.**

This must include the following:

Close-out document	FMCSA will verify
Final Financial Status Report (SF-425) and final voucher/request for payment (SF-270)	Does the final SF-425 reconcile with the final SF-270?
Final Performance Progress Report (SF-PPR)	Are all quarterly PPRs complete? Did the grantee meet all milestones outlined in the grant application? If not, is there an explanation why?
<i>If applicable, the close-out package must also include the Federally-Owned Property Report or any close-out certification process for sub-grantees.</i>	

**Submit the close-out documents.**

Send the complete package to the contact listed in the close-out notice, which may be the State Program Specialist or the Grant Program Office. They will ensure the close-out package is complete and, if so, send the package on to the GMO for final processing.



### KEEP IN MIND

Pay close attention to your close-out notice.

Some grants may require additional forms or documents, be sure to read your close-out notice carefully!

## Post-Award Phase Grant Management Checklist Continued

### STEP 8 Retain your records.

✓ Save all records for three years.

Grantees are required to keep all grant-related records, including financial documents, reports, and correspondence, for at least three years after the grant's final payment to comply with FMCSA requirements and facilitate audits.



**KEEP IN MIND**  
Get organized now to save time down the road.

Taking the time to organize your grant documents during close-out can save you time if FMCSA has to request them from you later on. These records will also be useful if you submit another application during a future funding cycle.



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