



# Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance

Improving commercial motor vehicle safety and enforcement

## Hazardous Materials Safety Training Grant Consolidation

***CVSA supports consolidating several existing hazardous materials safety training grants administered by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA).***

- The consolidated grant program should include the Hazardous Materials Instructor Training (HMIT), Assistance for Local Emergency Response Training (ALERT) and Community Safety (CS) grants.
- Funding for the consolidated grant program should come from existing user fees.

One of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration's (PHMSA) objectives is to regulate the safe transportation of hazardous materials, and to accomplish this, PHMSA sets standards for the transportation of hazardous materials. To help meet this mission, PHMSA administers several hazardous materials safety training grants. Specifically, PHMSA awards funding for training under the Hazardous Materials Instructor Training (HMIT), Assistance for Local Emergency Response Training (ALERT) and Community Safety (CS) grants. These separate grant programs target different stakeholder groups, despite sharing a common mission of training stakeholders on hazardous materials safety.

Due to the shared goals of the grants, many grant recipients receive funding from multiple grants to support training programs. For example, in fiscal 2024, five non-profit organizations received funding from multiple grants across the three programs.<sup>1</sup> Currently, if a recipient receives funding from multiple grants, they must submit separate funding proposals, track expenses for each grant separately and submit separate reports to the agency. Additionally, grant applicants must create projects that fit the narrow requirements of each grant, and funding levels are tied to the specific grant criteria as part of the application process. However, the training itself is often very similar, if not identical, because the information related to hazardous materials safety is the same – only the audience differs. In addition, because the audiences for each training grant are different, the training audiences must be kept separate. For example, HMIT funds industry training while the CS grant is for state and local government employees. As a result, industry members are not able to attend a training course funded under the Community Safety grant. However, there are benefits to training industry and enforcement together, as each group will bring a different perspective and ask different questions. The current structure limits the training that grant recipients can offer by limiting who can attend.

Overseeing separate grant programs also impacts the work that PHMSA can accomplish. First, administering multiple grant programs places burdens on the agency's workload, as they have to oversee each step of the grant process for each of these grants. Administering a single grant, which includes development of a notice of funding opportunity, reviewing all grant applications and making grant awards, is a cumbersome process. Meanwhile, PHMSA currently administers and awards three grants that accomplish similar goals, multiplying the demands on the agency. Additionally, the grant programs, at times, may have funds left over in a grant cycle due to a lack of high-quality applications, while the agency is forced to deny worthwhile applications under other grant programs

<sup>1</sup> *Hazardous Materials Grants FY2024*. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

<https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/sites/phmsa.dot.gov/files/2024-08/PHMSA%20HAZMAT%20Safety%20Grants%202024.pdf>.

due to lack of funding. This model limits PHMSA's ability to provide grant funding to quality applicants who provide necessary safety training on the transportation of hazardous materials, while also leaving funds unused for a specific grant's purpose.

***To address these challenges and better deliver comprehensive hazardous materials safety training, CVSA supports consolidating these existing hazardous materials safety training grants into a single training grant.*** The consolidated grant should encompass the purposes of the HMIT, ALERT and CS grants. Additionally, there should also be minimum levels, which would be based on the existing grants' funding, to ensure that training remains available for each of the intended purposes and audience groups under the new consolidated grant. Funding for the consolidated grant program should come from existing user fees.

Grant recipients will see benefits resulting from the proposed grant consolidation. By combining the funding into a single grant award, grant recipients can direct funding and other resources to projects that advance hazardous materials safety, rather than spending valuable resources on administrative tasks. The new, consolidated grant would also allow grant recipients added flexibility in their training offerings, such as combining the training of enforcement and industry together, as well as the flexibility to meet the most pressing training needs of enforcement and/or industry.

PHMSA would also stand to benefit from the consolidation of the individual grant programs. For example, PHMSA can more efficiently manage and administer their grant programs. By combining these related grant programs into one training grant, PHMSA can improve efficiency of the grant process, allowing the agency to more efficiently fund quality grant applications. Additionally, consolidating the grants allows for greater flexibility to ensure as many high-quality training initiatives as possible can be funded. PHMSA would no longer be limited by the individualized goals of each grant program and could utilize all the funds allocated for hazardous materials safety training.

Overall, consolidating the grants would provide both grant recipients and PHMSA with more flexibility. It would also reduce administrative burdens, which in turn would allow more funds to go directly toward training delivery. This new grant model would empower grant recipients with the opportunity to meet the safety needs currently being seen in the nation's transportation system, ultimately benefiting hazardous materials safety.