



Commercial Fishing Safety Training Grant Program

October 18, 2017

Fiscal Year 2017 Report to Congress



Homeland
Security

United States Coast Guard

Foreword

I am pleased to present the following report, “Commercial Fishing Safety Training Grant Program,” as prepared by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Senate Report 114-264 accompanying the Fiscal Year 2017 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act (P.L. 115-31) requires the Coast Guard to submit a report outlining the means by which it will administer this program, the metrics by which to measure the program, and the need for funding.

Pursuant to congressional requirements, this report is being provided to the following Members of Congress:

The Honorable John R. Carter
Chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

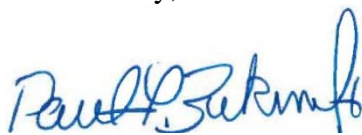
The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard
Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable John Boozman
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Jon Tester
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

I am happy to answer any further questions you may have. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 372-4411 or the Department’s Acting Chief Financial Officer, Stacy Marcott, at (202) 447-5751.

Sincerely,



Paul F. Zukunft
Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard
Commandant





Commercial Fishing Safety Training Grant Program

Table of Contents

I.	Legislative Language	1
II.	Background	2
III.	Discussion	3
	Establishing the Grants Programs	3
	Resource Needs to Administer the Grants Programs	5
	Fishing Vessel Safety Training Criteria and Requirements	6
	Evaluating Grant Award Requests and Awardee Activities	6
	Measuring Effectiveness of the Grants Programs	6

I. Legislative Language

This report responds to language in Senate Report 114-264 accompanying the Fiscal Year 2017 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Act (P.L. 115-31), which states:

The Coast Guard, in conjunction with NIOSH, is directed to submit a report to the Committee not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this act, outlining the means by which they will administer this program, metrics by which to measure the program, and the need for funding. The Committee also directs the Coast Guard to work with FEMA on how to properly implement a new grant program.

II. Background

The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-281), as amended by the Howard Coble Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-281) (hereinafter, collectively, “Acts”), directed the Secretary to establish a Fishing Safety Training Grant Program. This program, as authorized, was intended to provide funding to municipalities, port authorities, other appropriate public entities, not-for-profit organizations, and other qualified persons to conduct commercial fishing vessel safety training for vessel operators and crewmembers. The program also was authorized for the purchase of safety equipment and training aids for use in those commercial fishing vessel safety training programs.

The Acts also directed the establishment of a Fishing Safety Research Grant Program. This program, as authorized, was intended to provide funding to individuals in academia, members of nonprofit organizations and businesses involved in fishing and maritime matters, and other persons with expertise in commercial fishing safety. The funding would be used to conduct research on methods for improving the safety of the commercial fishing industry, including vessel design, emergency and survival equipment, enhancement of vessel monitoring systems, communication devices, deicing technology, and severe weather detection.

The Acts stipulated that the grants were to be awarded on a competitive basis and could cover up to 75 percent of the cost of any training or research activity. The Acts authorized appropriation of \$3 million for each grant program in each fiscal year from 2010 through 2017. The Coast Guard did not establish a Training or a Research Grants Program because the agency did not receive specific appropriations for these programs until FY 2017.

P.L. 115-31 included \$6 million for the two grants programs. The funds are available through September 2019.

This report outlines the means to administer the Training and Research Grants Programs, the applicable metrics, and the need for funding. The framework, resource needs to administer the programs, process for soliciting and selecting awards, and procedures for evaluating and measuring the program effectiveness will be the same for both the Training and Research Grant Programs.

III. Discussion

This report addresses the framework and requirements to establish the Commercial Fishing Safety Training Grant and Commercial Fishing Safety Research Grant Programs:

- The resources required to develop and carry out the grants programs;
- The process to announce and solicit grant proposals and selections of awards;
- The methodology to evaluate and audit grant recipients; and
- The methodology and metrics to measure the effectiveness of the grants programs.

Establishing the Grants Programs

Governing Regulations and Policy: The two grants programs, Fishing Safety Training Grants Program and Fishing Safety Research Grants Program, will be administered in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Regulations promulgated in 2 C.F.R. pt. 200 (“Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”). See 2 C.F.R. § 3002.10 (DHS adoption of 2 C.F.R. pt. 200). Further, the Coast Guard will follow DHS Financial Assistance Policies found in the DHS *Financial Management Policy Manual* § 6, Financial Assistance, effective October 26, 2015.

Grant Lifecycle Phases and Major Processes: In accordance with the aforementioned regulations and policies, each of the grants programs will follow the essential Financial Assistance/Grant Lifecycle phases. Those phases are identified as: Pre-Award; Award; Post-Award; and Closeout. Each phase has several major processes that can change because of award amounts, types, and assistance requested from different grantees as follows:

Phase 1, Pre-Award:

- *Budget Appropriation/Program Authorization* (See Background information above).
- *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Request* – Submitted through DHS Financial Assistance Policy and Oversight (FAPO) office to facilitate the Under Secretary of Management’s approval of the new financial assistance programs. Once approved and a CFDA number is assigned, it will be published on the CFDA website, which is maintained by U.S. General Services Administration.
- *Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)* – Prepared (See “Other Specific Information” below).
- *NOFO submission submitted for FAPO and OMB review.*
- *Approved/cleared NOFO posted to Grants.gov* – The NOFO is posted on the OMB-designated governmentwide website, Grants.gov, to notify the public of available grant opportunities. Publishing a NOFO in the Federal Register is not required.
- *Government Agency Review* – Coast Guard will receive and review grant applications in accordance with the NOFO.

Phase 2, Award:

- *Award Selection* – Grant applications will be reviewed and rated for awards on the basis of the intent and value to the program as set forth in the authorization for the program.

- *Award Notification* – Awarded grantees will receive a letter from the Coast Guard stating which project or projects are funded, the award amount, and the assigned Grant Technical Manager.
- *Award Acceptance* – The Coast Guard and awardees can negotiate issues such as amount applied for versus the amount awarded, and deliverables expected for the amount awarded. After mutual acceptance of the revised proposal, a formal grant is drafted and signed.
- *Congressional Notifications* – Such notification is required only if a single entity is awarded \$1 million or more.
- *USAspending.gov Reporting* – Reports will be submitted as may be required.

Phase 3, Post-Award:

- *Payments/Drawdown* – The Coast Guard will identify and use a proven system through which organizations receiving federal funds can draw payments preauthorized by the Coast Guard through the U.S. Treasury.
- *Financial Monitoring* – Submission of quarterly reports from the entity that was awarded funds.
- *Programmatic Monitoring* – This includes review of the grantee’s work plan, review of the grantee’s submitted progress reports, and, in some cases, having Coast Guard personnel and/or the Grant Technical Manager visit the activity to observe the equipment use and class instruction and to meet with the grantee’s project team.
- *Technical Assistance* – Such assistance may involve Coast Guard personnel and/or the Grant Technical Manager answering questions, providing required federal forms and explaining how to complete the forms, and acting as liaison between the grantee and any other Coast Guard staff elements with whom the grantee may be required to coordinate (Coast Guard financial management personnel, for example).
- *Audits* – Generally audits are required only if a single entity is awarded \$750,000 or more. However, the Coast Guard expects to conduct audits of all awardees periodically.
- *Modifications* – As part of “Programmatic Monitoring,” changes may need to be made to the scope, budget, and/or deliverables of the grant. Depending on the magnitude of the change, an amendment to the grant may be initiated.

Phase 4, Closeout:

- *Pre-Closeout Notifications* – The Coast Guard will provide as required.
- *Administrative Modifications* – The Coast Guard will conduct as may be required.
- *Final Reports* – The Coast Guard will create programmatic and financial reports.
- *Reconciliation* – The Coast Guard will complete a reconciliation of the funding allocated for the grants to equal money drawn.
- *Final Closeout Notification* – The notice will indicate the period of performance as closed, list any remaining funds that will need to be deobligated, and address the requirement of maintaining the grant records.
- *Funds Returned/Deobligation* – Funds that were not utilized for grants are reprogrammed to Coast Guard Program or Treasury.
- *Disposition of Property* – The Coast Guard will address if applicable.
- *Records Retention* – Records will be saved/archived as required for government agencies.

Other Specific Information: The NOFO is the primary means by which the awarding agency informs the public of the availability and scope of a grant program. In the case of the Fishing Safety Grants Programs, there will be two NOFOs required: one for the Fishing Safety Training Grants and one for the Fishing Safety Research Grants. At a minimum, the NOFOs will include:

- Program Description – This will include a program overview, objectives, and priorities for each grant program.
- Federal Award Information – This will include items such as: Estimated Available Funding for the NOFO; projected number of awards; possible period of performance; projected performance start and end date(s); and type of funding instrument.
- Eligibility Information – This will discuss eligible applicants, eligibility criteria, exclusions (organizations/entities not eligible for funding – if applicable), and any cost-share or matching funds requirements.
- Application and Submission Information – This will include important dates such as the application submission start date, application submission deadline, anticipated funding selection date, and anticipated award date. Additional information required will include delivery, format, and content requirements (e.g., length, font, type document).
- Application Review Information – This will provide applicants an explanation of the review and selection process for their submissions. At a minimum, it will discuss the general and specific criteria used in evaluating submitted proposals, the internal steps followed by the Coast Guard in processing the proposal, and, in the case of awards with a total amount of federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, information that DHS will require to review and consider the submission.
- Federal Award Administration Information – This portion of the NOFO will contain information on how successful applicants will receive their Notice of Award, the DHS Standard Administrative Terms & Conditions, Coast Guard Terms and Conditions, and the federal regulations with which they are required to comply. Other items discussed in this section include: grant agreement negotiations; financial management planning; progress reporting; federal financial reporting requirements; and closeout reporting requirements.
- DHS Awarding Agency Contact Information – This section will identify the point of contact (POC) information for the Coast Guard in matters related to the Fishing Safety Grants. It will include the name, phone number, fax number, e-mail, and mailing address of the designated POC.
- Additional Information – As may be needed.
- Appendixes or Enclosures – These may include items such as an Application Checklist or a Sample Review Sheet Used by Grant Scorers.

Resource Needs to Administer the Grants Programs

Personnel costs and travel funding to manage and oversee the programs are expected to be covered from the appropriated funds for the grants programs. The Coast Guard will consider utilizing Coast Guard Reserve or contract personnel for the 2-year time frame of the appropriated funding. Costs incurred by National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) personnel for evaluation and measurement of the grants programs may be reimbursed by the Coast Guard from the appropriated funds for the programs.

Fishing Vessel Safety Training Criteria and Requirements

The Coast Guard intends to require training courses conducted under the grants program to include only those courses with curriculums accepted or approved by the Coast Guard and listed by the National Maritime Center.

Depending on the course of instruction, instructors must be certified and accepted as marine safety instructors or drill conductors, or otherwise accepted as an instructor by the National Maritime Center. Individuals who apply and are selected to participate in a training class under the Grants Program must be associated with or employed on a commercial fishing vessel.

Evaluating Grant Award Requests and Awardee Activities

Evaluations: The awardees of a grant will be evaluated with respect to the work plan, the training activity, and equipment use as described in the grant proposal and in accordance with instructions in the NOFO.

Specific evaluation criteria for the grants programs are under development. The grants programs will be reviewed and evaluated for technical merit, personnel qualifications, and the degree to which a proposal offers potential value and measurements to program goals as stated in the NOFO. Prior to making a federal award, the federal awarding agency is required by 31 U.S.C. § 3321 and 41 U.S.C. § 2313 to review information available through any OMB-designated repositories of governmentwide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information.

Measuring Effectiveness of the Grants Programs

The Coast Guard will collaborate with NIOSH to determine the initial methodology and metrics for evaluating and measuring the effectiveness of the training grants program and the value of the research grants program. It is not expected that such evaluation and measurement to assess the success of the grants programs need be implemented until such time as there is a history of the training or research, which could be at least 2 years after activities have commenced.

NIOSH has a history of studying commercial fishing fatalities and injuries and recommending interventions to reduce them. Its collaboration in reviewing and analyzing the effect of a training grants program on personnel casualties will be an invaluable part of the post-award phase and in assessing the need for recurring funding for grants.

As a precursor to, and in support of NIOSH evaluation of the grants, awardees will be expected to provide a plan to assess the results and effectiveness of their training activities. To that end, awardees shall conduct student input, such as evaluations and anecdotal lessons learned from their training activities that can be used to consider expanding and/or renewing an award.