



## HMEP Mini Grant Best Practices

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### Submitted by the State Emergency Response Commission

*The following document was established to assist Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) in using the HMEP Mini Grant Process and serves as a best practice resource. The guidelines below are suggestions and examples other LEPCs have found to be beneficial. Questions pertaining to the reimbursement process should be directed to the SERC at (402) 471-7421.*

#### **Background:**

The Hazardous Material Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Planning Grant is provided by the US Department of Transportation (USDOT). The grant is designed to increase local effectiveness in preventing chemical accidents; to safely and efficiently handle hazardous materials incidents; and to enhance the implementation of the "Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act" (SARA Title III). Under SARA Title III, fees collected from hazardous materials transporters are granted to States for use by LEPCs. NEMA serves as the administrator of the HMEP Grant. According to the USDOT, since the inception of the program approximately \$182 million has been awarded in HMEP grants. Over 2,266,000 responders received training in part with HMEP funds.

#### **Eligibility:**

To be eligible to receive HMEP funds from the State an LEPC shall be in compliance with the requirements defined in the "Nebraska Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act" (EPCRA), Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 81-15, 191 to 81-15, 235:

1. Annually elect a chairperson (81-15, 216) and appoint a coordinator of information (81-15, 217b)
2. Establish rules to govern the LEPC function (81-15, 217a)
3. Establish procedures for receiving and processing information requests from the public (81-15, 217b)
4. Review (81-15, 217c) and exercise (81-15, 217d) the Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP) annually.
5. Have adopted by-laws on file with the SERC (81-15, 217a) 169
6. Conduct meetings in accordance with the Public Meetings Laws Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 84-1408 to 84-1414.
7. Shall file a fiscal and annual report with the SERC (81-15, 217 (2))

#### **LEPC Checking Accounts:**

Under the Nebraska EPCRA Neb. Rev. Stat. 81015, 217 (2), an LEPC may receive gifts, bequests, grants or other contributions or donations. An LEPC can establish a business non-interest bearing checking account by contacting their local bank. In order to establish a checking account an LEPC must obtain a Federal Tax ID Number. This can be done by calling the Internal Revenue Service at 800-829-3676 and requesting SS4. The form can also be found on line at [www.irs.ustreas.gov](http://www.irs.ustreas.gov). Requirements for accounts may vary between banks (i.e. service charges, minimum amount to be kept in account, etc.). The bank will need the Tax ID number, a mailing address for the LEPC, and some starting funds. It is suggested that an LEPC have several members able to sign checks.

The following are four examples of how LEPC's have chosen to establish their accounts:

- Regional LEPC Account hosted by 3<sup>rd</sup> Party  
Three counties combined to make a regional LEPC. Each county through the emergency manager submits yearly dues of \$200.00. The local public health district serves as the fiscal agent and maintains all the documentation, accounts etc. Reimbursement of HMEP funds from NEMA are directed to the public health district.

- **City/County Budget Line Item**  
Several LEPCs have line items in their city/county budgets through the emergency manager. Reimbursement of HMEP funds from NEMA go directly to the city/county and bypass the LEPC.
- **Regional LEPC Account hosted by an Individual**  
Seven counties combined to make a regional LEPC. Each county submits yearly dues. As a group they elect/appoint an individual to hold the checking account. This individual is charged with tracking, seeking reimbursement etc from NEMA.
- **Donations through Corporations**  
With the lack of initial funding to establish an account, several LEPCs have approached their local industry/corporations and obtained “seed money” that assisted in developing an account. This account then can be established using one of the above methods.

**Reimbursement:**

Certain activities that fall under the purview of the EPCRA can be reimbursed using HMEP funds. A complete list can be found on the NEMA web site or in the Grant Management Handbook.

**Accountability of Funds**

All funds within this grant will be subject to audit by the State Auditor, local internal audits, and audits made by the Fiscal Office of NEMA.

**Questions:**

Questions pertaining to the use of this grant, eligibility of funds or reimbursement of projects should be directed to the SERC Coordinator at (402) 471-7176.