FY 2008 Interoperable Emergency Communication Grant Program (IECGP)

Overview:

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program (IECGP) is an important component of the administration's larger, coordinated effort to improve interoperable emergency communications during natural disasters, acts of terrorism and other man-made disasters in the United States.

Purpose

In Fiscal Year 2008, DHS will award approximately $48.5 million to improve local, tribal, regional, statewide and national interoperable emergency communications during natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters in the United States.

The goal of IECGP is to improve local, tribal, regional, statewide, and national interoperable emergency communications, including communications in collective disaster response. IECGP funding will assist states, territories, local units of government, and tribal communities with implementing their Statewide Communication Interoperability Plans (SCIP) and aligning with the goals of the National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP) to further enhance interoperability.

IECGP will also advance near-term priorities identified by DHS deemed critical to improving interoperable emergency communications, consistent with goals put forth in the NECP. In FY 2008, IECGP has two priority groups: 1) Leadership and Governance; 2) Common Planning and Operational Protocols, and Emergency Responder Skills and Capabilities.

Funding

In FY 2008, $48,575,000 was made available under IECGP. The FY 2008 IECGP funds were allocated based on risk and statutory minimums in accordance with the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico will receive a minimum of 0.50 percent of the total funds allocated. Four territories (American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) will receive a minimum allocation of 0.08 percent of the total funds allocated. Grantees were not required to engage in cash or in-kind match for FY 2008 IECGP funds.

For FY 2008, there are four allowable costs categories: planning, training, exercise, and personnel. Equipment acquisition is not an allowable cost category for IECGP in FY 2008. All activities proposed under IECGP must be integral to interoperable emergency communications and must be aligned with the goals, objectives, and/or initiatives identified in the grantee's approved SCIP.

Eligibility

The Governor of each state and territory has designated a State Administrative Agency (SAA), which can apply for and administer the funds under IECGP. The eligible applicants for this

grant program are the SAAs who applied for the IECGP grants on behalf of the 56 U.S. states and territories.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications underwent a joint Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) and Grant Programs Directorate (GPD) review process to ensure that all applications complied with program requirements and to assess effectiveness of proposed investments before the funds are awarded. Funds are expected to be awarded by Sept. 30, 2008.

Program Highlights

In FY 2008, IECGP had two priority groups: 1) Leadership and Governance; 2) Common Planning and Operational Protocols, and Emergency Responder Skills and Capabilities.

- Establishment of formal interoperable emergency communications governance structures: Governing bodies for interoperable emergency communications efforts are essential to ensure coordinated and consistent planning, implementation, and resource allocation for emergency communications solutions. States and territories should establish interoperability committees that include multi-jurisdictional, multi-disciplinary, and intergovernmental representation in order to effectively manage interoperable emergency communications efforts statewide.

- Establishment of common planning and operational protocols: Common planning and operational protocols provide emergency responders with the procedures necessary to guide agency interaction and the use of emergency communications solutions. Grantees should continue strategic and tactical emergency communications planning efforts (e.g. SCIPs and Tactical Interoperable Communications Plans) and are expected to establish common operational protocols through activities such as the development of standard operating procedures (SOP), consistent use of interoperability channels, plain language protocols, common channel naming, and others. SOPs should be National Incident Management System Incident Command System-compliant.

- Enhancement of emergency responder skills and capabilities through training and exercises: Many public safety agencies do not conduct regular training or exercises to ensure that emergency responders have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to operate emergency communications solutions or follow procedures, potentially resulting in ineffective performance during an actual emergency, as reported in recent assessments including the National Communications Capabilities Report. Interoperable emergency communications-specific training and exercises that are Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program-compliant on technology solutions and operational protocols should be offered and conducted on a regular basis.