

## **ODP Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Q1: What is the purpose of the Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP)?**

A1: TICP serves as a planning tool to help sites exercise interoperable communications and to meet the Congressional mandate that grant recipients develop a tactical plan. TICP meets the requirements of Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5, *Management of Domestic Incidents*, and the DHS *National Incident Management System (NIMS)*.

### **Q2: How can ODP help us with the TICP?**

A2: Through its **Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP)**, ODP will provide to any site or state, on a first-come, first-served basis, no-cost technical assistance in developing and exercising a Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan.

ICTAP has assigned a site manager and a site technical lead to each UASI grantee and to states without a designated urban area. These individuals (and support staff) are available on a first-come, first-served basis to meet with a site's governance, operations, and technical working groups to facilitate TICP development and documentation and to support table top exercises.

The process for requesting ICTAP assistance is detailed in Question 19 below. Sites and states are encouraged to contact their ODP Preparedness Officer with questions.

### **Q3: How will ODP evaluate a Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP)?**

A3: There is no "pass" or "fail" for a TICP. ODP Preparedness Officers and subject matter expert staff will review and evaluate each TICP on its own merits. ODP recognizes that interoperable communications requirements will vary according to the specific needs of each site or state.

### **Q4: Does the TICP replace our strategic, long-term plan?**

A4: Not at all. The TICP should be developed in coordination with the long-term plan. The TICP is designed to prepare agencies for tactical interoperable communications during incidents. It should provide a snapshot of what radio equipment and methods your site currently has available and how those would be used in a tactical situation, such as the planned IED scenario.

**Q5: What agencies should be included in the Plan? Should federal and state responders be included?**

A5: At a minimum, sites should include in the TICP all agencies that are represented in their Urban Area Working Group (UAWG), if applicable. Sites also should consider the role federal, state, and additional local agencies play in incident tactical response and include them in the Plan as appropriate. However, there is no requirement that non-UAWG agencies be included in the TICP.

**Q6: What disciplines should be represented in the Plan?**

A6: At a minimum, law enforcement, fire, and EMS should be represented in the Plan.

**Q7: How does the TICP relate to the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Exercise requirement in the FY 2005 Grant Guidance? Where can I find detailed information on the IED scenario?**

A7: The planning and exercise of a site's response to an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) incident was a separate requirement of the FY 2005 Grant Guidance (See Page 50 of the Guidance). Sites have six months from ODP's release of the scenario to plan their response validation process. Upon submission of the plan, sites have *one year* to validate the plan as part of the cycle of multi-jurisdictional exercise activities required for the IED scenario. Details about the IED scenario will be sent separately to UASI sites and states. If a site has already tested, or plans to field test in the next 12 months, an interoperable communications plan involving a scenario similar to that of the IED scenario, it should contact its ODP Preparedness Officer about using that exercise in lieu of the IED scenario.

Sites should develop the Incident Communications Plan portion of the planned IED incident response validation in Section 5 of the TICP. See the [TICP Guidance and Template](#) for assistance.

**Q8: Do all UAWG agencies need to demonstrate communications interoperability in the IED scenario?**

A8: While the overall TICP should include all of the jurisdictions represented in the Urban Area, the Incident Communications Plan (Section 5 of the TICP) for the IED should only include agencies that would respond to the incident.

**Q9: We are purchasing communications equipment with 05 funds. Should our Plan include these assets?**

A9: The TICP is designed to help jurisdictions identify the communications assets that they currently have and to develop operations policies for the use of that equipment during an incident. Only equipment that is expected to be in operational use by the October 1, 2005 planning deadline should be included in the TICP.

**Q10: Our state does not have an UASI site. Do we have to designate a specific city or can we focus on a region within the state?**

A10: While the guidance recommends the use of a metropolitan area, some states have asked if they could utilize a region of the state for the TICP. States should contact their ODP Preparedness Officer, who will review the request and work with the state to determine eligibility.

**Q11: We were named as the designated metropolitan area by our non-UASI state. What funding is provided to support the development and exercise of a Tactical Plan?**

A11: As detailed in the FY 2005 Grant Guidance, State Homeland Security Grant funds can be used for the planning and exercise components of the TICP. Sites should work with their State Administrative Agencies (SAA) to identify appropriate funding from the FY 2005 allocation.

**Q12: The TICP is competing for our UASI site's time and resources. May we use the same resources across different working groups? May we use plans already in place or underway to meet the TICP requirements to exercise the NIMS scenario?**

A12: Yes and yes. ICTAP encourages sites to use personnel across the different working groups, particularly where experienced staff are in short supply. ICTAP also encourages sites to adapt from current or proposed plans that meet the spirit and intent of the NIMS scenario. Please discuss using such plans and exercises already underway or planned within the next 12 months with your ODP Preparedness Officer.

**Q13: We already have a communications plan. Do we need to re-do it in the TICP template?**

A13: If your site currently has a plan that includes the required TICP components (governance, equipment inventory, equipment policies and procedures, and training), you do not need to recreate the plan. However, all sites must develop the Incident Communications Plan (Section 5 of the TICP template) to support the IED scenario. If you are unsure whether your current plan complies with the TICP requirements, ICTAP can review the plan.

**Q14: How do we get NIMS Communications Unit Leader Training?**

A14: The NIMS Integration Center is currently developing a training methodology and certification requirements for the Communications Unit Leader position. Once this is completed, ODP will provide the information to all sites developing TICPs.

**Q15: Can ICTAP provide examples of memos of agreement/understanding that newer sites can use as examples and templates for governance?**

A15: Yes. ICTAP will do so with the permission and concurrence of its state and local partners. Please contact your ICTAP Site Manager about your particular need. ICTAP can also provide examples of “sanitized” TICPs. These materials are available through your Site Manager and are being distributed to ICTAP points of contact at the UASI sites.

**Q16: UASI locations are experiencing shortfalls in experienced staff to do planning work. What can ICTAP do to help?**

A16: In addition to ICTAP’s offering sites “no cost” assistance in technical, operations, and governance areas, sites are reminded that UASI and state grants may be used to hire staff and consultants. In addition, some sites and states are retaining the part-time services of recently retired employees who are subject matter experts with regard to local/regional communications systems. Sites should contact their State Administrative Agency (SAA) or ODP Preparedness Officer about the specific provisions of the FY2005 Homeland Security Grant legislation.

Sites also should remember to check state and local laws and regulations regarding employment and consulting before using Homeland Security grant funding for this purpose.

**Q17: What about a lack of continuity in governance working groups when key appointed and elected officials do not continue with the group?**

A17: ICTAP recognizes that many jurisdictions experience this situation. We have found that establishing a permanent core membership within a UAWG’s interoperable communications organization, and delegating certain authorities and approvals in writing, can reduce the impact of such circumstances. ICTAP Site Managers can provide examples of lessons learned and best practices to help sites meet this challenge.

**Q18: What is ICTAP doing about regional interoperability?**

A18: DHS and ODP recognize that regional interoperability is the next challenge. Regional interoperable communications involve both intrastate and interstate collaboration. Because no one approach fits all cases, we encourage sites to coordinate with neighboring UASI regions, SAAs, and ODP on using grant funds for regional interoperable communications. ICTAP can help states and Urban Areas identify best practices and standards to enhance regional interoperability.

**Q19: How do I request ICTAP assistance?**

A19: ODP provides technical assistance without charge to eligible states and local jurisdictions.

All TA requests must originate from the UASI or state grantee and should be coordinated through the State Administrative Agency (SAA). SAAs will submit TA requests either to the ODP Preparedness Officer assigned to their state or through the ODP Helpline. TA



requests also can be submitted to ODP in writing (via regular mail or email) or by telephone (followed by a written request).

Each request for TA should include a brief description of:

1. The nature and extent of the requestor's homeland security issue
2. The type of technical assistance needed
3. The relevant strategic goal and objective in the state or urban area homeland security strategy
4. The efforts taken to address the need and the identification of other jurisdictions or agencies in the region that have similar needs
5. Plans for maintaining and sustaining efforts
6. The requestor's desired TA schedule
7. The UAWG POC

For further information on requesting technical assistance, contact the ODP Preparedness Officer assigned to your state. You can also call ODP's Centralized Scheduling and Information Desk (CSID) at 1-800-368-6498 or email [askcsid@dhs.gov](mailto:askcsid@dhs.gov).

**Q20: What if I have additional questions?**

A20: For more information on the TICP requirements, please contact Keith Young, ICTAP Program Manager, at 202-786-9774 or [keith.young@dhs.gov](mailto:keith.young@dhs.gov). You can also contact the Centralized Scheduling and Information Desk (CSID) at 1-800-368-6498 or [askcsid@dhs.gov](mailto:askcsid@dhs.gov).