

# 2013 Homeland Security Grant Application Teleconference Question and Answer Session

## Minutes

**Thursday, November 14, 2013**

The Question and Answer Session Conference Call began at 10:05 a.m. with twenty (20) local jurisdictions and one State Agency participating. Three 2013 Homeland Security Grant Committee members were on the call as well (Tom Andross of Grafton County, Chief Mark Doyle of Merrimack, and Director Perry Plummer, Homeland Security Advisor). The call was led by Grant Administrator Pam Urban-Morin.

The following is a summary of the general information provided on the call.

- The grant application announcement for the availability of ~\$3.4 million in Homeland Security Grant Funding was made on October 14, 2013.
- The 2013 grant applications are due on December 13, 2013 at noon to the Grants Management Unit at 33 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH. We are approximately 4 weeks from this due date.
- The grant expires on August 31, 2015. Extensions on this grant are not expected. Projects must be completed before that date. It is suggested that large projects that cannot be accomplished in this timeframe should be broken down into phases.
- The application, background help, and source documents are available on-line. Please take the time to review the front page of the application. Go to the Department of Safety's Home page and there is a link to the 2013 Homeland Security Grants.
- There is no template for the application. Follow the format of the application. There are step by step questions. The Grant Committee scoring key is tied to those questions and the answers that correspond to them. Follow the format of application: Section I, question A, B, C etc. Please use a 12 pitch font so that it is readable for the Grant Committee members.
- The Grant Committee takes the grading of these applications extremely seriously. There is a lot of time and energy put into the process. Applicants need to do their due diligence to make sure that all of the areas outlined on the scoring sheet are completed sufficiently. Applications have been denied in the past because complete sections have been excluded from their submission. Those types of applications are not even scored. Make sure that required documentation and information gets included in the packet that is submitted to the Grants Management Unit.
- Applicants should make sure they have time to finish their project by the grant end date (August 31, 2015). They need to take into consideration the time it takes to get local approvals, NEPA approval etc. Do not apply for projects that cannot be completed in time.
- Regionalization is a key element. Applications should be multi-jurisdictional and possibly multi-disciplined as well. If you have other partners, provide written documentation from them verifying that they are committed to this project as well.

The stronger the case that you make, the easier it is for the Grant Committee to rate that favorably.

- Note that the US Department of Homeland Security has shifted the target capabilities to the core capabilities. The background information on that shift and what that means in the National Preparedness Guidance from states down to the locals is on our website. Be sure you are using the correct terminology in your application.
- The Authorized Equipment List (AEL) for project equipment has been located on the same site for years. An Information Bulletin was released on November 4, 2013 stating that it has been moved. We were aware of this and have included the correct website address in our applications. Our website has been updated to include the correct link as well. The new AEL looks quite different from the prior website. The functionality and search feature is quite different. It may take longer to search for the AEL numbers which are required on your application.
- Applications for Homeland Security Grants should increase the level of preparedness for the State of New Hampshire. There is a maintenance of current efforts that can be funded. However, generally, the items that increase preparedness are more favorably looked upon.
- The answers to the test questions are given to you in the scoring matrix. Applicants continuously submit applications that don't address certain areas that are worth 10, 15, or even 20 points. The Committee cannot give points for something that is not there. Applicants should look at the scoring matrix provided in the grant application. Be sure to answer all applicable sections and questions.
- Some projects require an Environmental and Historic Preservation Screening under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) that takes additional time to get approved. This includes any project that entails any level of construction, inside or outside of a building, or moving one tablespoon of dirt. They may ask for pictures of the site. As you are planning a project timeline, you should include an additional 30-60 days to meet this requirement.
- Applicants should be sure to clearly identify the problem they are trying to address and the solution they are proposing. Provide enough information to convince the Grant Committee that what you are asking for will fix the problem. Example: If you say you have radio gaps in this region and you are going to put a repeater up, the Committee will want to see something that proves it will fix that problem.
- Any vehicle-type applications will not be considered. (No trailers or motorized vehicles.)
- Regular duty radio equipment (portable or mobile radios) will not be considered as projects allowable for funding this year. This does mean that a repeater system that enhances regional communications wouldn't be eligible. It is referring to service radios.
- The application states that additional documentation shall be attached providing justification for this project. For example: if you have a communications study that has recommended certain updates or enhancements of technology, an After Action Report from an exercise that recommended implementing certain measures to be better prepared for a certain event, or an LEOP that makes a certain recommendation,

we have asked that those be attached to the application. If these are not included, you may throw yourself out of the competitive process upfront.

- Funding is currently available outside of the competitive process.
- Funding for exercising is available through the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division. Funding for training for Law Enforcement, Fire, EMS and other first responders is available through the Fire Academy. Contact information is available on our website. These funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Limited funding is available for maintenance and upgrading of equipment previously purchased through Homeland Security funds. It is not a competitive process. It has a shorter application process. Contact Pam Urban-Morin directly (271-7663) to access these funds.
- The Grant Committee is comprised of local representatives of major first responder affinity groups in the State as well as State Agencies that have ESF responsibilities. This Committee reviews and scores the applications.
- The Grant Committee Meeting is posted as a public meeting. Anyone can attend. It is not uncommon for the Grant Committee to have a question regarding an application. If you have applied for a grant, you may want to attend to speak on behalf of your project. It does not mean that your grant will be funded, but it could help the Grant Committee make a decision.
- After the Grant Committee meets, it will then make recommendations to the Commissioner of the Department of Safety and the Governor as to which items are fundable.
- In the last couple of years, there has been about a 1 in 5 chance of having your project funded. It is highly competitive. Those that provide a good, complete application increase their odds of funding.
- A Question and Answer Session was held on October 28<sup>th</sup> in the evening. The questions, answers, and points made during that call have been posted on our website. The minutes from today's call will be posted as well.
- For additional assistance, applicants can reach out to Grant Committee members (list is available on-line), Director Perry Plummer at Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Pam Urban-Morin or Janice Bresnahan at the Grants Management Unit (271-7663).

The following is a summary of the questions presented and answers provided on this call.

- **Question:** We are looking at a regional-type project that incorporates the purchase of a server that would host a county-wide CAD system and records management system. Is this something that would fit within the guidelines of this grant?  
**Answer:** Look at the AEL to make sure the equipment is eligible. These types of technologies are generally on the AEL. In the past, similar requests have not met the threshold of the scoring criteria. Look at the scoring criteria and see what that sort of technology does in the Homeland continuum. Sometimes, items that are more routine use for Fire, Law Enforcement, EMS and EMD do not make it based on the scoring criteria. It is not that they are not worthwhile or eligible, but they don't meet the

priorities of the grant. If it is on the AEL, and you decide to apply, make sure to explain that this is separate from something that is normal business use. Where does it connect to the priorities that are laid out in the application? Anything that is routine use, although eligible, tends not to make the cut for the scoring criteria. If it is not on the AEL, the Grant Committee cannot override that. Over the next couple of weeks, while you are working on this, you are encouraged to call the Grants Management Unit and speak with either Pam Urban-Morin or Janice Bresnahan (271-7663) with any questions.

- **Question:** Are grants strictly for a single item? As part of our plan, we have a number of attributes we are looking for to move our plan for preparation forward. Should we submit separate applications for each item or should we provide the list? Does the Committee ever grant portions of a grant request and deny others?

**Answer:** You can apply for a project that has multiple components. That can all go into one application. If it is a really large project, you should consider looking at the budget on the website and maybe only apply for enough to begin the project. The Committee doesn't generally fund 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of a project. On a rare occasion, we have taken out certain components because of various reasons. Generally, what comes through the door to the Grants Management Unit, is what goes out to the Grant Committee if it is eligible. If you want to do something in portions of funding, you might consider doing a couple of applications for that or doing that over a couple of years. If they are two different projects, then two different applications would make it easier for the Grant Committee to rate them separately so that one does not drag the score of the other one down. If you have a question about a couple of projects, you can call Pam or Janice, and they might tell you that one of them is better suited for EMPG funding.

- **Question:** One of the projects we are looking at is placing a back-up generator at a town facility. That will require a pad to place it on. Does that require this NEPA compliance or review?

**Answer:** Yes, it would. The Homeland Security Grant Program is not generally a generator program. I would direct you to Homeland Security & Emergency Management and the EMPG program. We have other layers of criteria for Homeland funds and one of them is our State Strategy. Unless the facility is a multi-jurisdictional or multi-disciplined dispatch type of facility or is a shelter that has other functionality in the town's LEOP, we do not fund a lot of generators in the Homeland Security Grant Program. Your field rep will be contacted to reach out to you and discuss the EMPG grant. It is a rolling application period, so you do not have to wait for the next deadline in order to apply. It does require a 50% match, but the match can be met with soft match. It does not have to be a cash match.