



Homeland
Security

Office of Grants and Training

ICTAP Bulletin

Connecting First Responders, Keeping America Safe



The Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP) provides free technical assistance to enhance interoperable communications among Federal, State, and local emergency responders and public safety officials in cities and States that have received grants from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office of Grants and Training (G&T).

January 2007

Highlights

- ICTAP is reorganized to better assist statewide planning efforts
- DHS Interoperable Communications Scorecards were released in December 2006
- 75 TICP Validation Exercises were held between May and October of 2006
- 75 TICPs were submitted in May 2006

DHS INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATIONS SCORECARD

After the Tactical Interoperable Communications Plans (TICPs) were reviewed, and as the ICTAP Tactical Validation Exercises (TVEs) came to a close at the end of Summer 2006, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) began the Interoperable Communications Scorecard effort. With support from SAFECOM and the Wireless Management Office (WMO), DHS analyzed 75 urban/metropolitan areas to determine the level of interoperable communications maturity. With communications Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from Federal, State, and local agencies, each site's TICP, Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs), and Exercise After Action Reports/Improvement Plans (AARs/IPs) were examined. Additionally, each site's Discussion Guide, a questionnaire designed to provide an opportunity for more indepth information from the site, was reviewed for insight into the governance structure.

Sites received their scores at the end of December, and ICTAP site managers were available to answer questions and clarify the process.

The scorecard results will assist DHS in making decisions regarding the assistance provided to State and local agencies.

Significant findings include:

- Areas developing and/or using shared systems tended to demonstrate more mature Governance Structures, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and Usage.
- Areas that sought funding from sources other than Federal grants tended to also have stronger governance structures in place.
- Regular training and exercises are needed to effectively link disparate systems to allow communications among multi-jurisdictional responders (including Federal and State).
- Cooperation among first responders in the field is strong, but formalized governance (leadership and planning) across regions has lagged. Governance will be critical in planning for larger-scale, multi-jurisdictional responses and implementation of next-generation technology.
- Areas that were part of the FY 2005 UASI grant program tended to demonstrate greater traction in strategic planning across the region.
- Areas that had a history of multi-jurisdictional cooperation because of prior incidents demonstrated stronger SOPs and Usage.

FY 2007 GRANT REQUIREMENTS HIGHLIGHT INTEROPERABILITY

DHS places a very high priority on ensuring that all Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) applications reflect regional coordination and demonstrate an investment strategy that institutionalizes regional security strategy integration. This priority is a core component in the Department's statewide grant programs and the Urban Area Security Initiative grants.

Building on previous guidance requirements for urban areas, and in support of the Secretary's goal for all States to implement interoperability capabilities by the end of 2008, the FY 2007 HSGP requires States to develop and adopt statewide communications interoperability plans by the end of calendar year 2007.

Interoperability must be incorporated in statewide plans by addressing the core SAFECOM Continuum elements that were included in urban area plans: governance, SOPs, technology, training and exercises, and usage of equipment. States should work

with their designated urban/metropolitan areas to incorporate existing elements found in the TICPs into this statewide plan.

Like the TICPs, the statewide plans will be peer reviewed, and all States will be required to test the plan through a multi-jurisdiction, multi-agency communications-based exercise.

2007 ICTAP APPROACH

In an effort to better assist State and Urban/Metropolitan Areas in coordinating the development of their statewide plans, ICTAP has reorganized its technical assistance procedures. Rather than having the two-person site management team assigned to each site, ICTAP technical assistance is now offered through a Regional Coordinator process.

These Regional Coordinators, organized according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regions, will assist the sites in achieving interoperable communications by addressing the exercise AAR/IP suggestions and the DHS Interoperable Communications Scorecard recommendations.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

For more information on ICTAP, visit the Web page at:

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/odp/ta_ictap.htm

For general information on ICTAP or other G&T initiatives, please contact the Centralized Scheduling and Information Desk at

1-800-368-6498 or askcsid@dhs.gov