

# Homeland Security Grant Program

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## Peer Review Process Feedback Survey: Preliminary Findings

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### Feedback Survey

A feedback survey was provided to all peer reviewers at the conclusion of the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) peer review process on April 7, 2006 and 80% of the 102 reviewers provided responses and comments. The feedback survey focused on the pre-review process, the review process, the peer review conference, the results, and solicited additional comments for improving the process.

This document highlights only the preliminary findings from the peer review feedback survey. Broader feedback and lessons learned from the overall FY 2006 HSGP process will be covered in a formal after action report to be completed summer 2006.

### Peer Review Process

Feedback from reviewers indicated that many were initially skeptical and unconvinced of the HSGP process when they arrived at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) in Emmitsburg, MD. However, after the peer review conference, the reviewers believed that the HSGP process was sound and supported its continued use for FY 2007.

#### SURVEY RESULTS

**83% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the FY 2006 HSGP Peer Review resulted in objective, consistent, and defensible scores and feedback.**

**79% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would like to participate in future DHS review processes.**

### Peer Review Panel Composition

Each State and Territory was asked to nominate potential State-level and urban area/local-level reviewers. Based on that solicitation, G&T received over 250 peer reviewer nominees, representing 48 States, three Territories, the District of Columbia, and 42 Urban Areas. G&T selected reviewers based on demonstrated extensive subject-matter familiarity across multiple homeland security disciplines and experience managing an integrated homeland security program. Familiarity with HSGP was also considered to be a benefit; however, it was not a requisite. A mix of backgrounds across the policy, operations, and programmatic areas was also considered.

Review panel composition was balanced to include representatives from eastern, central, and western regions of the country, large and small states, and local jurisdictions. In addition, a dozen federal reviewers representing the various components of the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Health and Human Services, were included in the final pool of reviewers. The feedback survey shows that the vast majority of respondents agreed that there was a balanced representation on each review panel.

#### SURVEY RESULTS

**96% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that each panel included balanced representation from different regions, disciplines, and backgrounds.**

**85% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that each panel included balanced representation from federal, state, and local agencies.**

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## Peer Review Level of Effort

G&T provided reviewers 16 days to independently review, score, and submit scoring sheets to G&T for six Investment Justifications, or approximately 60 Investments. The pre-review and scoring took approximately one hour per Investment, or roughly 60 hours to review 60 Investments. The review panels convened at the NETC from April 2-7, 2006, to discuss scoring variances, adjust initial scores, as necessary, and develop feedback to each grantee for each Investment. Although most respondents felt that insufficient time was provided prior to the panel convention given the assigned workload, the vast majority of respondents agreed that sufficient time was provided during the panel review week itself. In addition, many reviewers did not believe that the level of effort involved required for the review process was clearly communicated.

### SURVEY RESULTS

*69% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the level of effort necessary for the review process was clearly communicated.*

*78% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that panelists were given sufficient time to review, score, and return scoring sheets to G&T prior to the panel convention.*

*98% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that enough time was allotted for the review of each Investment during the panel meetings.*

## Conclusions

Based on the preliminary evaluation of the feedback surveys, suggestions for the FY 2007 HSGP process include:

- Clearly communicating the level of effort necessary and providing sufficient time for the workload assigned prior to convening in Emmitsburg, MD, but maintaining a similar time allocation for the review panels.
  - Retaining a similar balanced composition in the review panels of disciplines, backgrounds, and federal, state, and local representatives.
  - Preserving the current HSGP review process with some improvements made collaboratively with state and local stakeholders.
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