A Guidebook to Grants

Research and production by:

Homeland Defense
J O U R N A L

Sponsored by:

ORACLE®

An Open Letter to the Grants Community
from Homeland Defense Journal

Dear Grants Specialist:

The war on terrorism can not be fought without funding and federal grants have become a critical channel for distribution of much needed dollars to state and local emergency response organizations.

Homeland Defense Journal magazine (www.homelanddefensejournal.com) and our affiliate news radio station (www.homelanddefenseradio.com) were the first to provide regular coverage of federal grants through our ongoing series hosted by Michael Paddock of the Grants Office (www.grantsoffice.com).

We produce nationwide training conferences on the grants process that are routinely oversubscribed. The overwhelming response indicates the need for information and education on the subject. In addition to the grants process, interaction with readers is often dominated by interest in proposal writing and the criteria used by federal agencies for evaluation and award.

In response to this need, we undertook a project to research and produce a handbook for state and local grants managers. Our goal was to produce a concise manual that would capture several best practices and lessons-learned. This handbook was researched and written by Homeland Defense Journal's Senior Correspondent, Don Philpott, who is also an internationally recognized journalist with over 20 years with Reuters News Service.

Homeland Defense Journal would like to acknowledge the assistance and support given to this project by the Oracle Corporation who generously agreed to underwrite the research and production of this handbook. Oracle's partnership with state and local organizations has helped secure grants funding for much needed information technology.

If you or any member of your staff would like to subscribe to Homeland Defense Journal magazine, you can do so at our Web site at www.homelanddefensejournal.com. It is free to government managers and decision-makers.

We hope your organization will find this handbook to be of value. Please feel free to contact me directly with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,
Don W. Dickson
President

Market*Access International
Homeland Defense Journal Magazine
IT*Security Magazine
www.homelanddefenseradio.com

Email: ddickson@marketaccess.org

Introduction

Are You Getting Your Fair Share?

At the last count there was some $400 billion of federal grant money available during 2004 from scores of funding sources, In addition, there were hundreds of other opportunities for securing matching grants at local, state and national level.

In fact, it is almost impossible to calculate exactly how much grant money is available overall even after trawling through House appropriations bills and reports from oversight organizations like the National Science Foundation and Office of Management and Budget.

What is known, however, is that with the re-election of President Bush, the prospects for further increases in grant allocation over the next three or four years are almost certain, especially in the fields of information technology, homeland security, defense, law enforcement, and emergency management.

It is often said that grant seeking is a multibillion dollar a year business and that if it were a single company, it would rank at the top of the Fortune 500 list.

That has never been more true than today. Grant recipients, whether at local, municipal, county or state level, have to adopt Fortune 500-type business strategies if they are to compete successfully in the ever increasingly competitive grants environment.

"With the continued budget struggles faced by state and local leaders, federal grant money for homeland security should drive future information technology purchasing. It is both natural and necessary for our community to assist with the grants process to provide the technology expertise as needed by local management and leadership," said retired Lt. Gen. Keith Kellogg, senior vice president for homeland security at Oracle Corporation.

The most successful grant writing teams all have two things in common – good intelligence sources and highly professional grants writers.

Good intelligence alerts you to upcoming funding opportunities and the earlier you can get this information, the better able you are to prepare for it. Sophisticated intelligence sources are essential and will become even more so in the years ahead.

The most successful grants writers know exactly what the grant providers are looking for and ensure that their proposals reflect this to the letter. In competitive grant areas, it is these teams that secure the biggest bucks.

When it comes to grant writing you have to be ahead of the field and on top of the game. If you are not, it can have serious consequences. One local agency in Florida recently lost out on a major interoperability grant allocation because it failed to include one form in the budget section of the application. A neighboring county sheriff's department, with one of the most successful grants writing teams, funds a quarter of its $100 million plus budget from grant money.

The purpose of this report is to review the current situation from both the side of the grant recipients and the side of the grant providers and to explore why some grants teams are more successful than others.

It also looks at what is happening at state and federal level – modernization, computerization, standardization and so on – and what this impact will have on the grants process in the years ahead.

The Current Situation

The President's 2005 Budget continues to support and advance three overriding national priorities: winning the war on terror, protecting the homeland, and strengthening the economy.

Since September 11, 2001, more than three-quarters of the increase in discretionary spending has been directly related in the response to the attacks, enhanced homeland security, and the war on terror.

The 2005 Budget continues this spending trend: Significant increases in funding security programs combined with a dramatic reduction in the growth of discretionary spending unrelated to security.

Funding for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) programs and agencies has doubled since 2001 and includes an additional $10 billion to leverage detection technology and deploy additional personnel to enhance border and transportation security.

Strengthened counterterrorism efforts through the Department of Justice mean a 19% increase in homeland security funding over FY 2004 to $2.6 billion. The budget also brings overall FBI funding to $5.1 billion, a $1.9 billion (60%) increase over the FY 2001 level.

Health and Human Services (HHS) funding for bioterrorism research to protect the nation from the threat of biological agents has increased to nearly $1.7 billion in FY 2005 – and increased funding for research and preparedness to protect the nation from bioterrorism from approximately $300 million in FY 2001 to over $5 billion in FY 2004.

$5.6 billion has been secured over the next 10 years for the Project BioShield initiative to develop and buy cutting-edge drugs, vaccines, and other biodefense supplies.

More than $13 billion is allocated to help state and local governments prepare for terrorism, a 940% increase over the previous three years (1999-2001). The president feels strongly that these funds should be spent on training and equipping first responders for terrorism preparedness and response, which is one of the nation's top homeland security priorities.

Expanded support for training, equipment, and exercises for first responders and emergency medical providers, including an additional $5 billion in FY 2005.

Increased funding for the U.S. Coast Guard, including dramatic increases in modernization efforts and port security.

The success of all these efforts relies heavily on the sophisticated use of information technology.

The Challenge Ahead

In the face of ever-increasing competition for grants, the challenge facing local and state authorities and agencies is how to develop a process that gives you the competitive edge.

Apart from internal training, there are a lot of tools available to assist you — from intelligence gathering and early notification sources, to providers of technical expertise for in-house grants writers preparing the proposal, to external grants writing consultants.

The following pages will provide a greater insight into these challenges and how to overcome them.

Grant Recipients

Finding Solutions

Research at state and local level shows that there are still many authorities and agencies that either do not have in-house grants writers or that where they do have them, they are so overwhelmed that many grant opportunities cannot be pursued.

Many authorities fail to capture funding because they do not know what grants are available to them or where to go to find that information. They may have experience in applying for foundation or state money but have never written a proposal for a federal grant or for a particular agency where the level of competition is very different and much greater.

Others believe that the grant application process is so time consuming and costly that they are not prepared to spend the resources. In each of these cases, they are wrong and doing themselves and their public a huge disservice.

Michael Paddock of the Grants Office LLC said that one of the issues they run into is that a number of authorities find grants "so totally foreign that they believe they have no way of obtaining them."

"On the other side, there are those who think that grants are so easy to get that all you have to do is submit the paperwork to get funding.

"The truth is somewhere in the middle. The facts are that grants are accessible, the information needed to get them is accessible and they are becoming increasingly more accessible at federal and state level," he said.

"However, once you have that information it is not just a matter of submitting some paperwork to get funding to buy whatever you want. Grants typically solve a specific kind of functional problem and you have to make a compelling case in order to win funding.

"Simply saying that you want the money to replace X, Y and Z vehicles because they are old, is not a compelling case. You have to explain the implications of using old vehicles and how that impacts on your ability to do your job and how upgrading would allow you to achieve your mission more successfully."

Many authorities, said Paddock, still don't fully understand where all the grants come from or what other sources of funding are available that they can tap into and how to maximize that.

Authorities and agencies using the services of Grants Office come from one of three different readiness levels, he said.

1. They have a grant writer on staff and do not need any help with writing proposals, but they want information about what grants to go after.

2. They want additional support – they may not be experienced at writing grant proposals, they may not have applied to a particular funder before or it may be a high stake project and they want to know they have a professional working with them who has extensive grants experience.

3. They do not have a grant writer in place or they do but they are assigned to other things and don't have time to write and submit the proposals themselves.

Organizations like the Grants Office and other companies providing products and services to authorities and agencies at local and state level, such as Oracle, are offering both information and intelligence capabilities as well as grant writing support to assist their customers and attract new ones.

"This is a significant trend," said Paddock. "We are seeing more vendors taking a pro-active role in terms of informing their customers at state and local level about what grants are available to fund their products and services."

Moving Toward a Level Playing Field

Problem Areas

There are a number of problem areas. Writing formula-based grants is not too difficult because allocations have often been pre-determined and it really is just a matter of submitting an appropriate proposal. Competitive grants, however, are much more difficult compounded by the fact that there are usually more applications that meet the basic criteria than can actually be funded from the program.

Who gets what is then determined by ranking based on the criteria they have set for that particular grant. This could be significant of the program or the characteristics that the agency itself and, in some cases, Congress by virtue of the enabling legislation, have determined will be the priorities of the program.

Other grants, such as those based on a population-formula, are going to favor high-population areas that are also usually high-profile states such as California, New York and Florida. This is reflected in grants such as Homeland Security's first responder funding program, because population is an important component of the funding. There are certain minimums that each state gets but then population is thrown into the mix, and the high-density, high-risk urban areas get most of the money.

On the other hand, other criteria can come into play. A recent education grant program favored states that had written physical education standards in place. Wyoming, which had written standards, was awarded six grants under this program, while Ohio, with a much larger population but no written standards, got only two grants.

Note: Always remember that different characteristics may come into play, particularly in the case of competitive grants, where there is a strong disposition to whatever that particular competitive element is.

Distribution

The Administration has been very keen to use grants as a way to distribute funds to places of need. This, of course, results in one of the greatest dilemmas in the grants process – who determines need and what criteria are used. If the criteria are based on population, less populated areas are going to miss out. If it is based on risk of attack, cities like New York and Orlando, the world's top tourist attraction, are going to benefit.

Allocation

Another problem is allocating the money to those who need it and then ensuring that it is spent wisely. Two recent reports have been critical of this process. The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) asserted in November that while the Administration has increased funding for terrorism preparedness grant programs by more than 2,000% since FY2001, "this money is often distributed and spent in a wasteful and inefficient manner.

"By doling out current federal dollars based on population and parity, the current first responder funding formula shortchanges those areas most at risk. For example, of the top 10 states and districts receiving homeland security grants per capita, only the District of Columbia appears on a list of the 10 most at-risk places," said the report.

Christopher Cox (R-CA), chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, said "AEI's analysis reaffirms what this committee and the first responder community have been saying for the past two years — the status quo simply does not serve our homeland security needs."

Cox argues that the lack of risk-based funding formulas, coupled with the absence of clear preparedness guidelines, has led to some questionable uses of terrorism preparedness grants at the state and local level.

His committee found that as of April 2004, about 85% of the terrorism preparedness grants distributed through the FY2003 budget had not been utilized. They had been allocated by DHS in a timely manner, but not spent by states and localities.

He said:

- Almost one-third of the states allocated money among internal jurisdictions without regard to need or risk, and those that applied risk or need followed no standard approach to doing so

- At the state and local level, there are no federal terrorism preparedness standards to guide the spending of funds, leading to many instances of questionable expenditures

- Only a small amount of federal grant funding has been spent to date due to a lack of advance planning and other administrative obstacles at the local level

Standardizing Grants Documents and Evaluation

There have been moves toward standardizing grant forms and combining grants into single applications, especially at DHS, but it will still be some years before there is a standardized federal grants form. Achieving standardization is a massive task especially when every department within many agencies uses a different grant application form. Multiply that by the 600-plus grant programs from the 26 major funding federal agencies and it is easy to see the size of the problem.

Best Case

According to Michael Paddock, the U.S. Fire Administration "does absolutely the best job of any HS funding program in terms of simplifying and standardizing the application process and making all the money available to all the fire departments across the country at the same time. Everyone knows when the grants are going to be due, everyone is able to apply at the same time and there is extensive outreach and extensive support materials on their website that makes the process very sound. They go to great lengths to tell applicants what they want and how they should apply, what things they need to keep in mind, who they need to talk to and who they need to involve. It is a fantastic program and an example others should follow."

Not so Good

Some of the emergency management performance grants could be really great because they are an all-hazards grant, not just for terrorist-related activities. However, they are so complicated, said Paddock, in terms of how funding gets passed down to local level from the state, each of which has its own grants distribution program operating with different timelines, different priorities and different measuring requirements. It makes things very complex. It would be so much better to introduce a single nationwide program scaled to accommodate everyone.

However, experts agree that standardization of federal grant forms is years away even though some very modest progress has been made through the work of the USFA, Electronic Federal Grant Administration and similar bodies toward setting data standards for electronic grants administration.

Standardization among states is probably never going to happen, as states themselves frequently have multiple and widely different grants procedures in place, often within the same agencies and departments. Notable exceptions are Pennsylvania and Texas where initiatives have been launched to try to standardize forms and procedures although progress is slow because of the complexity of the problem.

"Ideally," said Paddock, "if we can build on the set of federal grant standards that have been developed and get to the point where states can agree that although this doesn't exactly match the way they administer funds but that it is close enough, and even get foundations and other funders to come in, you could have a single comprehensive source of information about all grants. It could be a government or nonprofit run repository and everyone would be on a level playing field. Everyone would have access to all the grant opportunities at the same time and they could apply using standard format applications, with a significant number of variables depending on what the funders were looking for."

Funding Sources

Finding sources of grant funding is a time consuming and tedious process because of the number of agencies involved at federal and state level.

Discover which agencies provide grants for your specific areas of activity.

Learn everything you can about those grants, especially funding priorities, application procedures and submission deadlines.

Make contact with the person responsible for the grant at the funding agency and build a rapport.

Grant Sources

Federal – Driven by legislation, large and complex, often grants to states and leaves state to distribute at local level, may be subject to oversight, forms differ within agency and from agency to agency.

State – Usually funded through a particular agency, forms differ by agency, states differ in distribution by competitive and block grants.

Foundations – The nation's 65,000 foundations awarded $30 billion in 2002.

Corporate – $10 billion plus annually – mostly awarded at local level.

Others – Discretionary legislative funding, service organizations - federal earmarks – little competition, assigned by/for Congress and associated with specific legislation, broad latitude in spending, primarily to nonprofits and municipalities, limited funds.

Ten Tips for Getting More Grants

1. Be specific in your budget. Most grants either have no restrictions or minimal restrictions on the lengths of the budget.

2. Keep careful and organized records to allow you to provide information to funders when requested.

3. Involve others in supporting your project but be judicious. Have a purpose for their involvement.

4. Make follow-up a part of the process. Remember that much of the grant-seeking is relationship building.

5. Get support letters that demonstrate a commitment on the part of collaborators and an understanding of the role they play in the project.

6. Research every funding source to which you intend to apply.

7. Tailor each proposal to each funder.

8. Don't include materials in your application other than those specifically requested.

9. Contact program staff and attend any bidder's conferences and information sessions the funders may offer.

10. Frame questions to get a meaningful response.

Funding Research

Monitor all sources

Federal Business Opportunities
http://www.fedbizopps.gov

Federal Register
http://www.archives.gov/federal_register/index.html

Grants.gov   http://www.grants.gov/

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance
www.cfda.gov

Foundation Center   www.fdncenter.org

Grants Office   www.grantsoffice.com

State Points of Contacts (SPOCS)

Federal and state program staff

Agency Web sites

Magazines, newspapers, e-zines, newsletters

Every federal department is required by Congress to issue an annual forecast. The DHS forecast can be viewed on the DHS Office of Small Business and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) Web site at www.dhs.gov and click "Business."

Most of these opportunities will also be listed in FedBizOpps and Federal Technical Data Solution (FedTeDS) Web site at www.fedteds.gov

Planning

Workplan development
- Choose funders with a direct correlation to program and scope
- Map funders' deadlines on a schedule
- Trim the workload
- Budget time and resources

Proposal preparation
- Be specific
- Plan extensively
- Follow directions
- Be aware of matching requirements

Follow up
- Send thank you notes
- Invite funders to events
- Submit reports on time
- Maintain and built relationships with funding staff

Grant Writers

There is considerable concern and frustration at the local and state levels about the complexity of the grant application process, the narrow time frames involved, and a growing tendency to merge grants while reducing the overall funding available. The following case studies best illustrate some of these concerns.

Case Studies

Orange County Sheriff's Department

Orange County Sheriff's Department, Fla., (OCSD) is one of the largest law enforcement agencies in the southeastern United States with an annual budget of over $100 million and more than 2,000 employees. It is part of Florida's HS Region 5 Task Force, which covers 9 counties and includes Walt Disney World and many other world famous tourist attractions as well as the Daytona race track, four international airports, the Patrick Air Force Base, the Port Canaveral cruise ship terminal, NASA and many Department of Defense (DoD) contractors. The area attracts 42 million visitors every year.

In 2004, the department had just 15 days to put a DHS grant proposal together. It realized that it could attract even more money if a task force applied collectively.

Jeff Templeton, manager of the Criminal Justice Programs Office, was in charge of the process.

"We got the 9 counties in the region and all the municipalities to agree to the proposal. We then sent people to Washington to make sure that the application would be written correctly. Of the 14 grants that were awarded, we were ranked No. 2 and received $6 million for interoperability and communications together with a $2 million match," he said.

"We were successful, despite the very tight timeline, because we have a tremendous partnership here. Teamwork is the key to our success in Central Florida because everyone is on board. This is important because HS is not just a police issue, it involves fire, public health, local government, emergency manage-ment, public schools and private industry. As we have developed our strategies, everyone has had an input and where there have been issues, we have worked through them together to find solutions. We have also developed excellent relations at state and federal level."

That is one reason, he said, that his team has an 80%-plus success rate when applying for grants. Last year, the department was awarded almost $34 million in grants.

Templeton's working day starts with scanning all federal, state and other grant opportunities that are posted on an internal Orange County Web site. He is looking for grants for his own department as well as opportunities to partner with other agencies both to maximize funding potential and, if necessary, to use their skills and expert-ise in order to satisfy the objectives and criteria of the grant. Some grants require that law enforcement be the lead agency, others require another agency to file. "We look at every opportunity there is," he said.

"The secret to success is in asking and answering all the basic questions – what is the problem, what is your solution, timeline, ultimate objectives and budget. That pretty much covers most grants although they all have different ways of asking this and different require-ments for how you report everything."

A Matter of Concern

One of Templeton's concerns is that either for simplifi-cation or cost-cutting purposes, there is a move toward merging grants.

"It seems like a lot of places are cutting back on funding and where resources are available, the competition is much fiercer," he said.

Recently two Justice grants were merged into one with the overall funding reduced. Law enforcement received funds directly in the past because of the terms of one of the grants. Now the county receives the funding and decides on the allocation so law enforcement may not receive anything.

"We anticipate a decrease in department funding from these areas in the future so we are gearing up to write more grants so that we can maintain and increase overall funding levels. Grant funding is absolutely essential to us because it impacts on every program we have," he said.

Another concern has been the differences in forms and criteria even within the same agency. "Once you have learned what the differences are and how the criteria vary, then it is no longer difficult."

However, the principle key to success is the department head. "It has to be someone who aggressively encourages the pursuit of all opportunities," said Templeton. Orange County Sheriff is Kevin Beary, who was last year named Sheriff of the Year by the National Sheriff's Association.

Other agencies and authorities also use the OCSD's grant writing expertise and Templeton and his team visit them to offer advice and expertise.

North Dakota Department of Health

Danielle Kenneweg is director of cancer protection and control at the North Dakota Department of Health and responsible for both writing and overseeing grant applications for various types of funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Some of the grants guarantee funding to the state but still have to be applied for. Others involve competitive applications. Both can be frustrating, she said.

"Every year, whether it is a competitive grant or not, we are told to write the grant for the dollar amount that we need. But we know that we are not going to get what we ask for. If we ask for $2 million we get $1.3 million and that is a pretty significant reduction. We get an allocated amount that has already been determined and set aside for us, which is pretty much the same year after year. So even while writing the proposal we have to be aware of where we can make the necessary cuts in the budget when we get the award," said Kenneweg.

The application process has not simplified in the last eight years while the budget requirements for the proposal have become very complicated because there is a federal match. Figuring all of it can be a very frustrating experience, she said.

Tip: It may seem obvious but when you are working with complicated budgets it is essential to have your math checked. A $10 error early on will throw everything else out and that is the first thing the grant evaluator checks. If there are errors, the proposal comes back to you and that involves more work, slows up the approval process and receipt of funds.

"Some of the problems we have had to overcome involve working with local agencies. When the idea of matching grants was first introduced, it was a huge issue with local agencies who had no idea where they were going to find the money. We had to sit down with them and help them figure out potential sources for the match – either cash or in kind. We also found soft match at state level and threw that into a big pot so that everyone had enough.

"Another issue was that it took about three years for local hospitals to understand the importance of sending us their data that we could forward to CDC. The time they spend collecting that data for us has a monetary value and counts as a soft match. As a result they now see the benefit and are cooperative," she continued.

"A struggle that we constantly have with our local agencies is that they don't have time for evaluation, the skill or the buy-in about the importance of evaluation. We have been working with them to build up their knowledge about the importance of evaluation and how to do it so that we have the data we need, and we can see if our outreach dollars are being best spent.

"One of the other things we have done is to simplify the application process for local agencies. They used to have to submit a three-part form. Now, they can file each part of that form separately and electronically. It has reduced the pressure on them to file and the electronic filing skills they have developed have helped us by streamlining the process statewide.

"Unfortunately the same is not true with filing for federal grants. Grants are usually announced in the Federal Register and we are supposed to have 30 days from then in which to file for continuation grants and 45 days for competitive grants. However, once the grant has been announced, the guidance gets mailed to us so the time crunch becomes huge. Internally, this causes huge problems as all grant applications have to go up the chain of command for approval. This is a frustration that we have expressed to CDC often and we have tried to send the message that once it is in the Federal Register, the guidance should be sent to us electronically. Some other areas of CDC have switched to electronic submission and this would help us greatly.

"I am sure there are huge infrastructure issues involved in setting this up and lots of bugs to work out," she said.

This is also a problem with the states. While the directors of state and territory cancer programs communicate with each on a regular basis, every one of them has a different format for creating their budget even though they all have the same requirements, the same guidance and so on.

"They have been trying to standardize this for seven years and we still don't have a standardized budget sheet" for cancer programs, although CDC has introduced a standardized budget sheet for the Office of Smoking and Health," she said.

"Above all," she added, "I would like to see consistency across federal funding. I appreciate it would be hugely difficult, but writing one federal grant is not the same as writing another because there are different intricacies even within the same department. This leads to inconsistencies across program areas even when you have the same funding source."

Don't be Afraid to Ask Questions

Contact the program officer and ask:

• Does your proposed project fall within the agency's current priorities?

• What is the budget for this grant? Do you expect any change next year?

• Are awards made on the basis of special criteria?

• What is the anticipated application/award ratio?

• What are the most common mistakes you see in grant applications?

• Would you review our draft pre-proposal?

• Could you provide a previously funded proposal for us to read for format and style?

• Who is responsible for reviewing the proposals?

• Could you provide a copy of the application evaluation form?

Writing Tips from the Experts

Problem Section

• Be specific – don't exaggerate or be vague

• Demonstrate the need for your methodology

• Ensure that reviewers can anticipate your solution based on your analysis of the problem

Methods (Procedures) Section

• Start with your objective and set out the precise steps your will take to achieve it

• Include what will be done, who will do it and when it will be completed

• Explain what additional resources will be needed, how they will be paid for and how they will help you achieve your objective

Evaluation Section

• Include an evaluation component for every project objective

• Explain the methodologies to be used to validate the evaluation

• Stress evaluation as a tool for replicating the project in other programs

Budget Section

• Make sure your calculations are clear, logical and error-free

• Be comprehensive and include all associated costs – training, insurance, maintenance, etc.

• Be specific, give details

• Include the cost of budget support

• Justify out of the ordinary expenditures even if not asked to do so

Grant Evaluators/Providers

Considerable efforts are being made at federal level to ease the grants application process for states and local government. The authorities recognize that the biggest burdens are the time constraints involved and the complexity because of the number of different grants.

Both of these problems have been identified at DHS and measures are being taken to make it easier for grants writers.

A View from the DHS Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP)

Heber Willis and Marcelino Galvan, branch chiefs with ODP, said ODP grant programs are now pretty straightforward as all funds go to the designated state administrative agency for disbursement.

Simplifying

"We have bundled several programs into one application to make it easier for everyone," said Willis. "It wasn't manageable for us to do it individually and it didn't make sense to make state administrative agencies submit multiple applications, all with almost identical deadlines. This was a decision taken early on but people have to understand that we are still building the train as we run it."

ODP started out as a small equipment program for first responders about 8 years ago. Since 9/11 it has grown exponentially and more programs have been added by Congress.

"Just trying to get your arms around that and meet the very tight deadlines that Congress has imposed is very difficult," said Willis. "There are deadlines when we have to make the money available to the states, when the states have to come back to us with applications and when the states have then to make awards locally."

Last year was the first time ODP bundled both applications and the automated Grants Management System to get everything through in one round. Other programs will be bundled into the single application process for FY 05 but grant guidance for that is still in draft form.

Changes in the Reporting Procedure

Because the program started out as just an equipment funding program, the staff at DHS used to review budget detail worksheets. Every single item and widget that was being purchased was reviewed, scrutinized and approved on a line by line basis.

"We are still doing that with some of the programs that have not closed out," said Willis. "However, beginning with the last fiscal year, we are changing that. We are getting away from getting budget detail worksheets here by placing the responsibility on the respective state administrative agencies for ensuring the accountability of the widgets. They then provide us with a broader picture of what they are doing and how the equipment that they are purchasing is supporting the statewide strategy of increasing responder preparedness.

"We will check out the equipment they have purchased when we go out and do onsite monitoring once a year but we are getting out of the business of counting boots and gloves up here at federal government."

Evaluation and Measurement and Other Changes

The statewide strategy starts with a needs assessment to establish a baseline of where they are in their ability to prevent, respond and recover from acts of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. They then develop a strategy based on that needs/risk assessment and establish statewide goals and objectives. The various projects they then develop have to be directly tied to and show that they support the goals and objectives of the statewide strategy. "We are slowly shifting in that direction," said Willis.

The next part of the process is evaluation and measurement "and we have not nailed that one down yet – it is still being worked on," he said.

"Concurrent with all that is HSPD-8, which is going to determine how we measure all this across the nation. There are a lot of work groups working on this and we are getting there but we are not there yet."

The Biggest Difficulty

"State and locals will all tell you that there is too much pressure in filing but they always meet the deadline. It is a lot of pressure because it is a short turnaround and there is a lot of work for them, especially for the states that have a smaller staff. **It is a lot of work to try to pull all this together and to be able to intelligently tell us what they intend to do with the money without doing sloppy work,"** said Willis.

"We recognize that it is tough for them but in almost all cases they do a good job. We do some revisions along the way, as you would expect.

"However, where they have the biggest difficulty is with the programs that require that 80% of the money is made available to the locals within 45 days of us awarding to the state."

ODP disperses funds promptly to the states as is required by federal law and accepts that this is where bottlenecks may occur.

"When states submit their applications to us, they have pretty much got to know what they want to do with that money otherwise they will have great difficulty meeting that 45-day deadline," said Willis. "It is not a lot of time, especially for a larger state with a lot of jurisdictions. Arizona is pretty simple as they work with 15 counties, which is how they have chosen to do it. Other states, because of their dynamics and laws, may have several hundred locals who are involved. It is tough for them but it is an inflexible deadline because the appropriation law says that's the way it is."

Galvan added that the strict timelines are there to make sure the states get that 80% down to the local jurisdictions within the allotted time. "This is to make sure they do have the equipment on hand and that they are prepared for an incident if one does happen. Congress has given these deadlines to make sure that funding is out of the door and in the hands of the first responders in the local jurisdictions."

Willis said that they were frequently asked, "Why the money can't be distributed up front – 'let us spend it and then we'll tell you what we did with it' – but the law doesn't allow us to do that.

"The way the program works is that you have to incur the obligation up front and then draw down from federal funds as part of a reimbursement scheme."

Vendor Assistance

ODP also can see advantages with vendors getting into the procurement cycle at an earlier stage and assisting grants writers by providing technical information or aiding with the grants proposal, especially if they have been chosen as sole-source providers.

"If it helps them at the local level to meet their goals and strategies, I see no problem with this," said Willis. "It is just more help to them and if it is allowable equipment according to the grant guidance we can see no problem with that provided the procurement falls in line with the normal review and approval process."

Technical Assistance

ODP does everything it can to support the states with their applications and submissions of statewide strategy and needs assessment.

The statewide strategy is an online submission and there were some technical difficulties with the Data Collection Tool but ODP stepped in and provided the technical assistance needed to help all states meet their deadlines.

Reporting and Help

ODP has already started pushing technical assistance to states and locals about how reporting is to be handled. The theory is that it will be easier for everyone to head off problems if the states are trained from the outset about what is required of them and how to supply it.

According to Willis, ODP has a lot of technical assistance available. For help, call the Central Scheduling and Information Desk at 1-800-368-6498.

Ten More Tips for Successful Grant Writing from the Experts

1. ALWAYS FOLLOW DIRECTIONS!

2. Research the grant thoroughly.

3. Involve all other interested parties.

4. Establish credibility from the outset.

5. Be positive — know what the problem is, and what it takes to solve it.

6. Always have several people with different backgrounds and fields of expertise review your application and the math.

7. Make sure the proposal clearly explains the need, objections and solution.

8. Always comply with length restrictions imposed by the funding agency.

9. Make sure all elements of the proposal mesh together – goals and objectives must relate to the need/problem, activities must relate to objectives and so on.

10. Make sure it is submitted on time.

Ten Reasons Why Grant Applicants Fail

1. Don't follow directions.

2. Request too many items.

3. Do not itemize costs.

4. Fail to make a case for cost-benefit.

5. Don't provide a problem statement.

6. Don't shop around for lowest costs.

7. Don't make a case for financial need.

8. Don't check their work.

9. Lack collaboration, partnerships.

10. Request is for low priority items.

Compiled by US Fire Administration and the Office for Domestic Preparedness.

More Resources and Help

Justice

Grant evaluators at the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) in the Department of Justice recommend that grants writers follow a two-step preparatory approach to ensure successful submissions.

The first step is planning – review the grant application notice, establish timetables, address the selection criteria and highlight model proposal strengths.

Second, read the notice thoroughly and don't be intimidated by the language. Note any application workshops, print out all included forms and **when in doubt, ask questions.**

Ten Questions to Ask

1. Who is eligible?

2. When is the deadline?

3. What is the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number?

4. What is the award amount per grant?

5. How many projects will be funded?

6. Is there a matching requirement?

7. Where can I get the application?

8. Is there a page limit?

9. Where do I submit the application?

10. Who is the program contact?

The secret to successful grant writing, according to the evaluators, is planning:

• Assess time available

• Research programs well in advance

• Spend two thirds of your time on planning and one third on writing

**Main Reasons Why Applications
are Delayed or Rejected:**

• NOT clear or not detailed enough

• NOT consistent with institutional policy

• DOES NOT meet federal requirement

• NOT aligned with purpose or statute

• DOES NOT plot out the life of the grant

• DOES NOT achieve project goals

**Useful Tips from Office of Justice Programs
(OJP) Evaluators**

• Use visual aids (charts, maps and tables) to emphasize
main points and allow for quick comparison

• Use most recent information and facts to establish
need for the project. Utilize Census data, compare
target area with region and nation

• Budget for the life of the grant, address matching
requirements and non-federal support from applicant
and partners – community buy in

• Above all, apply – you won't get anything if you don't apply!

The **Department of Justice Response Center** provides
assistance and answers inquiries from the public,
law enforcement agencies, institutions and grantees
about grants and programs, funding opportunities,
and grant-management related questions. It provides
application kits and assistance for grants available
from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
(COPS) and from the Office of Justice Programs (OJP),
which includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA),
Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), National Institute of
Justice (NIJ), Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency
Prevention (OJJDP), and Office for Victims of Crime (OVC).
Person-to-person assistance is available from 9 a.m. to
5 p.m. (EST) Monday – Friday. Messages may be left
after hours and calls will be returned the next business
day. A 24-hour fax-on-demand service is also available.

**The Response Center's Toll-Free Number:
(800) 421-6770**

**Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Area:
(202) 307-1480
Fax: (202) 616-8594**

Trends/Directions

There are significant trends and developments taking
place in federal law to simplify the grants process by
rolling several grant programs into a single application,
standardizing the application process and expanding
electronic notification and application.

Spearheading the changes is Grants.gov, the single
secure Web site to find and apply for federal grants, and
one of 24 E-government initiatives under the governance
of Office of Management and Budget (OMB). However, it
was one of only two E-government initiatives to success-
fully meet OMB operational goals this year.

Having just celebrated its first anniversary, Grants.gov
demonstrates that E-government is making it easier
for citizens to interact with the government.

"In just one year, Grants.gov has established itself to
be a proven concept and an indisputable success,"
Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G.
Thompson said. "In just 12 months, site usage has
grown significantly to more than 5 million page views
each month and the momentum continues."

Grants.gov is the single Web site unifying federal grants.
Through Grants.gov, state, local, and tribal governments,
colleges and universities, nonprofits, research institutions,
and other organizations can access, find and apply for
grants from more than 900 grant programs represent-
ing more than $360 billion in annual grant funds offered
by the 26 federal grant-making agencies.

Significant Accomplishments

Already, more than...

• 1,200 electronic grant applications have been received

• 3,000 grant-seeking organizations have enrolled to
apply for grants online

• 1,400 grant opportunity notices are currently posted
on the Web site

• 600,000 grant opportunity notices are e-mailed to
interested parties each week

"Our growing usage results from several factors,"
said Rebecca Spitzgo, Grants.gov program manager.
"General awareness is building due to marketing efforts
and word-of-mouth buzz in the grant community.

"Grants.gov lists 100 percent of federal grant notices and we have had more than 60 percent of our grantor agencies able to successfully post application packages and accept grant applications electronically. And we've enhanced the site making it easier than ever to find and apply for a wider range of grants.

"While increases in site usage and features have been steady throughout Grants.gov's first year, it is our future that we are most excited about," said Spitzgo. "We plan to announce even more new capabilities before year-end. We also know **there are thousands of grant-seeking organizations across the country that can benefit from Grants.gov but have not yet heard about it.** There is much work to do as we enter our second year, but we're ready for and excited by the challenge."

Grants.gov is a collaborative effort led by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Collaborative partners include the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Labor and Transportation, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Environmental Protection Agency, National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Science Foundation.

For more information about Grants.gov, visit www.grants.gov.

Measurement, Evaluation and Increased Accountability

As the grants process is fine tuned at federal level, more sophisticated measurement and evaluation techniques are being used to ensure funding is being spent in a timely and appropriate manner.

The "9/11 Recommendations Implementation Act" legislation (HR 10) currently moving through the House of Representatives, will have a major influence on this. There has been some criticism over the DHS's first responder grant system because it focused too heavily on state minimums and raw population counts, rather than critical infrastructure and risk. These issues are addressed in the new legislation which, among other things, ensures faster funding to first responders and better targeting of funds to high-risk areas.

Under Section 1805 of the bill, all first responder grant applications would be ranked in priority of how each grant would "lessen the threat to, vulnerability of, and consequences for persons and critical infrastructure." The bill further specifies that threats are to be interpreted by the Department of Homeland Security by giving "greater weight to threats of terrorism based on their specificity and credibility, including any pattern of repetition."

This means that before there is any discussion of state minimum grants, every application for funds needs to be ranked according to risk and known terrorist threats. This will free up hundreds of millions of funding dollars that will now be allocated strictly in accordance to risk-based terrorism analyses.

The Role of the Private Sector in the War on Terrorism

Christopher Cox, Chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, acknowledges that the federal government must change the way it does business if it is to be successful in defending our nation and our way of life.

Defeating terrorists through technology requires smart investment and private sector leadership.

"We need to make it easier for the private sector to engage with the Department of Homeland Security when it has good ideas to share," he said. "And it is equally essential that the government work with the private sector so that basic federal research can quickly become applied technology."

R&D investment across key federal partners has seen a 44% increase since September 11, to $132 billion. Department of Homeland Security R&D will see the greatest increase of any Federal Department—15.5% in FY 05, he said.

This increase in investment recognizes the key role that the private sector plays in protecting critical infrastructure. It is also recognition of the importance of technological innovation to the mission of the Department of Homeland Security.

He said, "We have got to begin to demand from our homeland security investments not one but two things: first, that they make us safer; and second that they make our nation more secure by contributing to economic growth.

"Developing and implementing new technologies that meet the needs of homeland security and our economy means engaging the private sector as never before, he continued. It means giving the private sector incentives—and providing the funding," he said.

Top Areas to Watch

Technology

New technologies that support homeland security and first responders from nanotechnology to imaging devices can scan containers entering and leaving our ports.

Also watch for technology that supports interoperability, whether it is developing common standards so that all the computer networks within federal agencies can talk to each other, or developing a nationwide automated interoperability solution as envisaged by the Statewide Template Initiative and National Response Plan.

Communications

The most critical need is still to get information to first responders as rapidly as possible. Deployment of wireless enhanced 9-1-1 service is among the most urgent homeland security enhancements states currently face. A Federal Communications Commission (FCC) deadline requires wireless carriers to include location-tracking software in wireless handsets by December 31, 2005, and yet, many of the more than 6,000 state and local emergency call centers are currently unable to use this technology.

Oracle Can Help You Get More Grant Money and the Right IT Solution

"It is apparent that the vendor community must be pro-active at the state and local level in assisting clients with the grants acquisition process," said Steve Brooks, grants coordinator for Oracle's Homeland Security Business Unit. "It is not effective to approach our customers after they have been awarded grant money to sell our products and services. We must be engaged from the very beginning of the grant program cycle, offering assistance and direction." That is why Oracle has invested internal resources to serve their customers in and through the grant process.

Brooks added, "Our state and local customers, as well as our sales and delivery teams, need to be more aware of the many grant programs and their respective grant cycles. It is similar to the military process of intelligence preparation of the battlefield. You must study and learn as much as possible about the objective and any opponents along the way to accomplish

the mission. You need to have multiple sensors to identify grant program information, how they fit for a particular project, and most importantly, the cycle or timeline for applying, winning and spending the grant." Oracle has established a knowledge base of grants information and promotes a 'way ahead' view of the current and future Homeland Security related programs.

In June 2004, The Department of Homeland Security' Advisory Council released the report from the task force on state and local homeland security funding. This report emphasized 'challenges with the traditional procurement processes resulting in delays in homeland security purchasing and overwhelmed and under-staffed state and local governments unable to deal with the complex grant process. Oracle saw these issues as an opportunity to help. Brooks stated that Oracle wanted to help their clients in the following ways:

1. Define and design the best possible, most cost effective technology solutions for Homeland Security.

2. Research and gain awareness of grant sources to fund such projects.

3. Assist with the application process by providing the technical documentation and best practices approach to make the grant application a winner.

4. Work closely with local government leadership and their purchasing process to abridge the procurement cycle in order to rapidly build and deploy needed homeland security solutions.

The Power of IT — The Oracle Solution

Understanding the Challenge — Answering the Call

Beneath the yellow, orange and red security alert levels that make headlines, Homeland Security poses massive and complex management and collaboration challenges:

How do we collect, integrate, analyze and share sensitive information across public- and private-sector organizations?

How do we coordinate efforts designed to shield Americans from future threats?

How do we ensure the integrity of information while protecting individual privacy?

How do we build Homeland Security processes and infrastructure to address today's realities, while preparing for future threats?

Oracle has nearly three decades of experience supporting federal defense and civilian agencies as well as state, local and municipal governments. Oracle is already at the core of America's critical information infrastructure: Oracle's database, architecture and applications power government agencies, Wall Street, utilities, hospitals and educational institutions.

With this experience, Oracle understands the scope and depth of the Homeland Security challenge and is committed to bringing together its leading technology infrastructure, applications, and domain expertise to deliver secure, cohesive, relevant, and flexible solutions. Oracle works with its broad partner network to provide a diverse and inclusive portfolio of end-to-end and point capabilities.

Leveraging IT to Secure America

Building a robust, cohesive national infrastructure that will connect diverse public and private-sector organizations must start with a common foundation. Government agencies must embrace a common approach to architecture across business, data, technology and application levels to successfully integrate deployed legacy systems and add new functionality to address emerging threats. Oracle asserts that any viable Homeland Security information infrastructure must follow the Federal Enterprise Architecture (FEA) framework and observe the principles defined by the Office of Management and Budget E-Government Task Force.

This approach allows agencies to make the right decisions while avoiding redundant development expensive, inflexible technologies.

As we appreciate the requirement for integrated, cohesive architecture, Oracle offers a unique set of baseline technologies and solutions that map directly to FEA and E-Gov requirements for access, availability, scalability, manageability, interoperability and security.

Information Assurance — The Oracle brand is built on the quality and dependability of our security. Oracle designs all offerings with built-in, inherent security. While other vendors make claims on security, only Oracle has been truly validated by 15 independent security evaluations (all other vendors combined have one) including the International Common Criteria (ISO-15408) and U.S. Federal. Oracle supports intra-organizational collaboration by supporting secure information sharing while safeguarding the integrity of each organization's data.

Business Continuity — Interruptions in any component of the nation's critical infrastructure are devastating. Oracle builds every solution to deliver business-critical availability and superior performance. Widely deployed in the financial services market and throughout the Department of Defense, Oracle offerings automatically detect, prevent, and respond to unforeseen disruptions.

Communications and Collaboration — The ability to share information assets is integral to Homeland Security coordination. It is also critical for first response to immediate threats to critical infrastructure, as well as communication with constituents and emergency responders. The *Oracle Collaboration Suite* provides data integrity, performance, and reliability. We offer compelling value by maximizing existing infrastructure and delivering the industry's lowest total cost of ownership.

Critical Infrastructure Protection — Oracle recognizes that securing critical infrastructure is a massive and complex challenge. *Oracle Threat Manager (OTM)* is a critical infrastructure protection application. It is an interactive Web-based, planning, decision support and collaboration application that supports identifying and assessing threats, analyzing vulnerabilities of infrastructure assets and planning vulnerability reduction and evaluating threat reaction capabilities.

Border and Transportation Security — Oracle's strong identity authentication features combined with partner applications support the protection of America's borders, waterways and ports. In addition to the traditional password and PIN, the Oracle platform supports partner developed document authentication and biometric verification to prove "you are who you say you are." This information can be stored on a smart card or token for improved security at border crossings, thus facilitating visa applications, import/export trade and both business and personal travel. When stored directly in Oracle, biometrics such as fingerprints, facial images and iris scans can be searched quickly and accurately for a comparison against known watch list subjects. A timely identification of potential suspects adds a significant increase to the security and protection to the nation's borders.

Integrated Criminal Justice — Oracle *E-Business Suite* offers advanced integrated criminal justice functionality to support collaborative law enforcement requirements. Oracle *Case Management* collects and manages case, inquiry, event, and investigation data. This integrated, secure, and comprehensive solution reduces processing time, improves quality of service, centralizes data collection, as well as increases speed of case resolution and inquiry response. Oracle further supports collaboration requirements with its *Process Connection* capability – enabling integration at the process level with built-in authentication mechanisms and real-time flow update capabilities.

First Responders — Oracle offers a series of training solutions that enable organizations to ready, prepare, and educate first responders to effectively identify threats and manage emergency situations. *Oracle iLearning* is a flexible, on-demand education tool. This platform allows organizations to offer distance learning on how to handle critical situations such as bio-terrorism and chemical attacks. It reduces travel cost and increases classroom reach and attendance.

Public Health — Oracle offers a simplified set of comprehensive infrastructure solutions based upon our core technology set of products, the Oracle Database and Application Server. Specifically, Oracle offers a patient-centric data repository, the Oracle Healthcare Transaction Base (HTB), designed to provide health departments with a consolidated view of the overall health of an individual community. It can provide health departments with an infrastructure to establish an enterprise health record, including capability for business intelligence. Further, Oracle offers an integration solution based upon the Oracle Application Server that can transmit messages from any existing system to the HTB, thus leveraging existing systems development while providing an enterprise infrastructure for future development.

Resource Tracking and Event Alert — Oracle has created a solution that can provide a community the ability to both track homeland security resources, and also provide alerting capability. This capability utilizes Oracle's spatial technology to assist users in mapping potential recipients based upon current events, and can transmit notifications to users via a variety of message protocols, including e-mail, fax, voice and pager.

ORACLE®

For more information, please contact an Oracle representative at 1.800.633.0584, or visit: www.oracle.com/homeland