



Public Safety Interoperable Communications Grant Program FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1. What is the purpose of the Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) Grant Program?

A1. The PSIC Grant Program will provide funding to States and Territories to enable and enhance public safety agencies' interoperable communications capabilities. The PSIC Grant Program is a one-time grant opportunity to enhance interoperable capabilities with respect to voice, data, and/or video signals and encourage the use of innovative cost-effective and spectrum-efficient technology solutions using or enabling 700 MHz.

Q2. How much funding is available under the PSIC Grant Program?

A2. The PSIC Program will award \$968,385,000 in grants to States and Territories. Funds granted through the PSIC Grant Program are consistent with the existing FY2007 SAFECOM Grant Guidance.

Funding for the program comes from the anticipated proceeds from the 700 megahertz (MHz) spectrum auction, as part of the transition to digital television broadcasts.

Q3. How are the PSIC funds allocated?

A3. The funds are allocated using a two-part process. First, each State, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico will receive a minimum of \$3 million and each Territory will receive a minimum of \$500,000 to ensure that it will be able to make meaningful improvements to its interoperable communications capabilities. The remaining funds – more than 80 percent – are allocated to States and Territories using a formula similar to the current Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) risk formula. This formula is the product of three variables: threat, vulnerability and consequence.

Q4. What variables were considered as part of the risk analysis?

A4. This formula is the product of three variables: threat, vulnerability and consequence. Vulnerability and consequence variables are an all-hazards construction in that they account for the relative severity of the effects of a disaster, regardless of the type of disaster considered. These variables also incorporate such factors as the population of an



area, its economic output, the presence of nationally critical infrastructure, and national security concerns. The threat variable is based exclusively on terrorism threats.

Q5. Who is eligible for the PSIC Grant Program?

A5. The eligible applicants for this grant program are the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam. The Governor of each State and Territory has designated a State Administrative Agency (SAA), which can apply for and administer the funds awarded under the PSIC Grant Program. Accordingly, the relevant SAA is the only agent eligible to apply for the funds identified in this program announcement.

Q6. Where can I find the information for my State's Administrative Agency (SAA)?

A6. To find the SAA for your State, please link to this website:
<http://www.dhs.gov/xgovt/grants/index.shtm>.

Q7. Can local public safety agencies apply directly to NTIA or DHS for these funds?

A7. No, local agencies cannot apply for or receive grant funds directly; however, local agencies can receive funding from its SAA through the pass-through process.

Q8. What is the pass-through requirement?

A8. Each State or Territory receiving grant funds is required to pass through not less than 80 percent of the total award amount. A pass-through recipient must be a public safety agency that is a State, local, or tribal government entity or nongovernmental organization authorized by such entity, whose sole or principal purpose is to protect safety of life, health, or property. The District of Columbia has no pass-through requirement. For Puerto Rico, the pass-through requirement is 50 percent of total award amount. Due to the unique nature of the Territorial governments in Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, no pass-through requirements will be applied to those Territories. However, the Territories are expected to take into account the needs of local communities prior to making funding decisions.



Q9. Does the PSIC Grant Program have a match requirement?

A9. Yes, each public safety agency receiving PSIC funds must provide, and document, matching funding equal to at least 20 percent of the total project cost, excluding training activities. The match requirement can be met during the three year period of performance for this Grant Program.

As provided in 48 U.S.C. § 1469a, the matching requirement does not apply to the first \$200,000 in grant funds awarded to the Territorial governments in Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Q10. Does the match requirement apply to training costs?

A10. No, under the statute, training activities are excluded from this match requirement. Training activities are capped at 20 percent of the total allocation for a given State's or Territory's total investments.

Q11. Can PSIC funds be used to purchase equipment operating in frequency bands other than 700 MHz?

A11. Yes, however, PSIC funds are intended for the acquisition of equipment in the 700 MHz spectrum or interoperability solutions (such as gateways or IP-based networks) that enable interoperability between 700 MHz systems and those agencies operating in other bands. Accordingly, PSIC funds will be available for equipment and technology in other frequency bands as long as the Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan and Investment Justification outlines how the solution is capable of achieving interoperability with the 700 MHz band now or in the future.

Q12. What are allowable PSIC expenditures?

A12. Based on the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, the PSIC Grant Program covers the acquisition of, deployment of, or training for the use of interoperable communications systems that use, or enable interoperability with communications systems that can use, the reallocated public safety spectrum in the 700 MHz frequency band for radio communication.

Although all interoperability solutions will be considered for funding, PSIC Grant Program objectives encourage proposals with a focus on advanced, next generation, and



proven technologies. Some examples of innovative solutions include, but are not limited to, the use of voice-over internet protocol (VOIP) for radio communications; broadband voice, data, or video applications; mobile public safety networks; multi-band/multi-mode software designed radios; network interconnect technologies; and satellite communication systems. It is important to note that the PSIC requirement to demonstrate interoperability with or use of 700 MHz spectrum must be addressed in any interoperability solution.

Q13. How do these expenditures relate to the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum?

A13. The allowable expenditures for the PSIC Grant Program align with the lanes of the Interoperability Continuum as set forth in the SAFECOM Grant Guidance (i.e., governance, standard operating procedures, technology, training and exercises, and usage) and provide broader context for understanding the complexities associated with technology acquisition, deployment, and training. Figure 4 in Section VII, Part A of the Grant Guidance illustrates the alignment of PSIC requirements with the Interoperability Continuum. The grant guidance also outlines allowable costs within the definitions of planning, acquisition, deployment, training, and management and administration.

Q14. Can PSIC funds be used to hire public safety personnel?

A14. PSIC funds may not be used to support the hiring of sworn public safety officers for the purposes of fulfilling traditional public safety duties or to supplant traditional public safety positions and responsibilities. For example, a local, uniformed, law enforcement patrol officer cannot be hired using grant dollars to perform regular local law enforcement patrol duties.

Q15. What types of advanced technologies can be purchased using PSIC funds?

A15. Based on the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, the PSIC Grant Program covers the acquisition of, deployment of, or training for the use of interoperable communications systems that use, or enable interoperability with communications systems that can use, the reallocated public safety spectrum in the 700 MHz frequency band for radio communication.

Although all interoperability solutions will be considered for funding, PSIC Grant Program objectives encourage proposals with a focus on advanced, next generation, and proven technologies. Some examples of innovative solutions include, but are not limited to, the use of voice-over internet protocol (VOIP) for radio communications; broadband



voice, data, or video applications; mobile public safety networks; multi-band/multi-mode software designed radios; network interconnect technologies; and satellite communication systems. It is important to note that the PSIC requirement to demonstrate interoperability with or use of 700 MHz spectrum must be addressed in any interoperability solution.

Q16. Are service-based and software-based interoperability solutions eligible for funding under the PSIC Grant Program?

A16. Yes, service-based and software-based solutions are eligible under the PSIC Grant Program. Additionally, operating and maintenance (O&M) costs associated with some of the solutions are eligible, such as satellite fees, hosting costs, cellular service, provider services, or commercial applications. O&M costs must be new costs with a direct correlation to the overall success of the grant project. A plan for the sustainability of these O&M costs must be provided by the grantee.

Q17. Can PSIC grant funds be used for training?

A17. The PSIC Grant Program allows for no more than 20 percent of a State or Territory's overall allocation to be used for training activities. Allowable training-related costs under the PSIC Program are described more fully in Section VII of the PSIC Grant Guidance.

Q18. What is a "spectrum-efficient solution"?

A18. The PSIC Grant Program defines a "spectrum-efficient solution" to be one that utilizes the least amount of spectrum necessary to accomplish the mission effectively within the budget, management plan, schedule, use, and other constraints. Emphasis on technology that meets public safety's mission is paramount in critical communications and should be addressed in any discussion on spectrum efficiency to justify why a given solution was selected. Promoting spectrum efficiency is one PSIC technology objective, which is equally weighted against the other objectives such as increased adoption of advanced technologies and cost-efficient interoperability solutions.



Q19. How are the Statewide Communications Interoperability Plans (Statewide Plans) related to the PSIC Grant Program?

A19. DHS established the requirements for States to develop Statewide Communications Interoperability Plans prior to the establishment of the PSIC Grant Program. The PSIC Grant

Program is using the Statewide Plan as one of the evaluation criteria for the program. The Statewide Plans need to be consistent with the SAFECOM criteria and include three specific PSIC criteria. The SAFECOM criteria are outlined and explained in the Statewide Interoperability Planning Guidebook which can be found at:

<http://www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/statewideplanning/>. In addition to addressing the criteria outlined in the Guidebook, the Statewide Plans must address the PSIC criteria.

Specifically, they must address:

1. How States plan to operate in or interoperate with the 700 megahertz (MHz) spectrum;
2. How the local and tribal governments are included in the statewide plans; and
3. How non-government public safety agencies are included in the statewide plan.

Q20. When is the deadline for the States to submit their final Statewide Plans?

A20. For the PSIC Grant Program, states must submit finalized Statewide Plans no later than November 1, 2007. However, States and Territories have the option to submit preliminary Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan to DHS by September 30, 2007 for an interim review.

Up to 5 percent of the total State/Territory allocation may be used by an applicant to complete its Statewide Plan to ensure the PSIC criteria are incorporated. Funds designated for this purpose will be made available upon award. Pre-award costs and match requirements associated with the Statewide Plans can include costs that were incurred as of April 1, 2007.

Q21. How does the PSIC Grant Program complement other federal interoperable communications grant programs?

A21. Applicants receiving PSIC funds are required to demonstrate that each federal funding stream supports a discrete component of an overall project. Additionally, the PSIC Grant Program was designed to be consistent with the SAFECOM's grant guidance on interoperable communications.



Q22. Can PSIC funds be used to support an existing interoperable communications project?

A22. No. Supplanting requirements for PSIC are consistent with those for all other federal grants as it relates to projects with ongoing or existing budgets and funding. PSIC funds may be used to support, for example, an existing statewide communications system; however, this funding must support a unique component of the system that does not already receive existing local, state, or federal funding.

Q23. What are the key deadlines associated with the PSIC Grant Program?

A23. The dates below represent key milestones associated with the PSIC Grant Program:

- July 18, 2007—NTIA and DHS jointly announce funding allocated for awards to States and Territories and release grant application materials.
- August 2007 (30 days after publication in the Federal Register) —States and Territories submit application and brief narrative.
- November 1, 2007—States and Territories submit finalized Statewide Plans.
- November 1, 2007—States and Territories submit Investment Justifications.

Q24. When will the PSIC funds be released to the grantees?

A24. Up to 5 percent of the total State/Territory allocation can be used by the applicants to complete its Statewide Plan to ensure that the PSIC criteria are incorporated. Funds designated for this purpose will be made available upon award (i.e., on or about September 30, 2007). This amount is considered part of the State's portion of the non-pass-through funds. The funds can only be spent at the State level for developing the Statewide Communications Interoperability Plans, although the funds can be used to support local involvement and participation in Statewide Plans.

Release of the remaining PSIC award funds, less the Statewide planning funds, are subject to successful completion and approval of Statewide Plans and Investment Justifications. Upon approval of both the Statewide Plan and Investment Justifications, the remaining PSIC funds will be released to grantees.

Q25. What is the period of performance for the PSIC Grant Program?

A25. The project period begins on October 1, 2007, and ends on September 30, 2010. **All funds must be expended by September 30, 2010.** Given the statutory deadline for the program, **no extensions can be granted for this PSIC Grant Program.**



Q26. What if I have additional questions?

A26. For more information on the PSIC Grant Program, please contact the Centralized Scheduling and Information Desk (CSID) at 1-800-368-6498 or askcsid@dhs.gov

PSIC Grant Program updates will be posted on the NTIA website:

<http://www.ntia.doc.gov/psic>

Media and Congressional offices should contact NTIA at (202) 482-1840.