

PSIC Quarterly Newsletter

Winter 2010/2011

Funding America's First Responders

The Public Safety Interoperable Communications Grant Program (PSIC) is a \$1 billion grant program jointly administered by the U.S. Department of Commerce (DoC) National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Grant Programs Directorate (GPD). PSIC awards are assisting public safety agencies in the acquisition of, planning and coordination of, deployment of, and training for the use of interoperable communications systems.

PSIC HOSTS GRANTEE CONFERENCE IN CLEVELAND

On October 5-6, 2010, the PSIC program held a two-day conference designed to support grantees' programmatic efforts to complete their PSIC Investments by sharing information, strategies, and tools. In addition, the conference provided opportunities for grantees and PSIC program staff to discuss program challenges and identify potential solutions. The event also served as a medium to foster networking and partnership building among grantees and Federal partners.

PSIC HOT TOPIC

PSIC and Narrowbanding

Funds awarded under the PSIC Grant Program may be used for narrowbanding projects; funds may be used to purchase equipment that meets narrowbanding requirements, educate users about the requirements, conduct frequency coordination and analysis, and perform systems acceptance testing, among other activities. These expenditures must align with a State or territory's previously proposed and approved PSIC Investments and align with the most recently approved Statewide Communication Interoperability Plan. In addition, a State or territory must show that it can accomplish this work between now and the end of the PSIC period of performance. PSIC funds cannot be used for the payment of Federal Communications Commission (FCC) licensing fees associated with narrowbanding requirements.

Please direct specific questions about allowable PSIC expenditures to PSIC@dhs.gov.

For additional information regarding narrowbanding, please contact narrowbanding@fcc.gov.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

- 47 States and Territories Represented
- 140 Total Participants
 - » 104 Grantee Participants, including 14 Panelists
 - » 19 Federal Participants
 - » 17 PSIC Support Team Members

Topics included PSIC Program audits, match requirements, the PSIC extension and close-out process, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance. With 14 grantees participating in the panel discussions, attendees also heard about successes across the Nation. For example, the South Carolina

representative discussed how the State used PSIC funds to build out its statewide 800 megahertz communications system to provide nearly 100 percent radio coverage. A recent response to a school shooting at Socastee High School benefited from this expanded coverage—first responders had in-building communications where they previously had no coverage. Additionally, Federal speakers presented on the National Emergency Communications Plan, the Public Safety Communications Research Program, and FCC narrowbanding requirements.



The conference also focused on expanding stakeholder engagement and promoting programmatic successes. In addition to the presentations and panel discussions, grantees had the opportunity to meet individually with a FEMA Program Analyst and PSIC program staff to discuss specific PSIC challenges and success stories.

The PSIC program staff learned from submitted feedback forms that grantees benefited from the conference's content. For example, many attendees stated that peer networking and the individual meetings with the PSIC Program Analysts and NEPA team representatives were very helpful.

REMINDER! QUARTERLY DEADLINES

The Federal Financial Report (FFR) and the Biannual Strategy Implementation Report (BSIR) are due January 30, 2011. If you have any questions when completing these reports, please email PSIC@dhs.gov.

The peer networking also continued after the conference. After hearing about the Tennessee Valley Regional Communications System during the Grantee Success Stories panel presentation, several States expressed interest in expanding the system's connections.

After the conference, representatives from Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia met to discuss the possibility of connecting their respective Project 25 communications systems to enhance the region's interoperability landscape. The region hopes to develop more concrete plans by early 2011.

The overall success of the event was due in large part to the high number of grantees in attendance and active participation in the conference sessions, as well as content that was tailored to address identified grantee needs.

Through both individual meetings with the grantees at the

conference and communications through the PSIC@dhs.gov account, the PSIC Program Office will continue to identify grantee needs and develop related tools and resources to support them.

PSIC LOOKING AHEAD

The Second Annual Assessment of the PSIC Grant Program (available online, <http://www.oig.doc.gov/oig/reports/2010/OIG-11-001-A.pdf>) released on October 7, 2010 by the DoC Office of Inspector General, highlighted that the PSIC Grant Program has successfully focused on helping grantees achieve the grant program goals through the release of guidance documents, workshops, and most recently through the PSIC Grantee Conference. The PSIC Program Office will continue to tailor programmatic assistance throughout the grant period of performance to help ensure success.

STAY CONNECTED WITH PSIC

- PSIC Grantee Conference presentations and conference materials are available at <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/psic/conference.html>.
- PSIC Grantee Success Stories and Lessons Learned are available at <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/psic/news.html>.
- Please direct any PSIC Grant Program questions or feedback to PSIC@dhs.gov.