

HEART OF TEXAS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE OPERATING POLICY AND APPLICATION GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The *Heart of Texas Council of Governments Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee Operating Policy and Application Guidelines* do not supercede the existing *Bylaws of the Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee*; rather, this policy expands upon the bylaws to encompass the standard operating procedures and grant application guidelines for federal Homeland Security Grant Program funding in conjunction with the *Interlocal Cooperation Agreement Between the Office of the Governor and the Heart of Texas Council of Governments*. The *Bylaws of the Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee* clearly address conflicts of interest and compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act as described in Texas Government Code, Chapter 551.

The Heart of Texas Council of Governments (HOTCOG) Executive Committee approves members of the region to the Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee (EPAC). The EPAC is authorized to review, prioritize grant applications, and make funding recommendations to the HOTCOG's Executive Committee for submission to the Office of the Governor's Public Safety Office (PSO), Office of the Governor of the State of Texas. In addition, the EPAC recommends and implements items, approved by the Executive Committee, including local policies regarding the grant application process, attendance requirements for prioritization meetings, by-laws, prioritization of grants applications, and the scoring process. The EPAC evaluates each funding proposal and makes ranking and funding recommendations and policy changes to the HOTCOG Executive Committee for final approval.

The application and scoring procedures are established for the review and scoring of applications for OOG-PSO funds. The EPAC will review and score all applications within the HOTCOG region.

RESPONSIBILITY

HOTCOG staff has the final responsibility for ensuring that this Policy and all requirements of the *Interlocal Cooperation Agreement between the Office of the Governor and the Heart of Texas Council of Governments* are implemented.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1. Notification to Potential Applicants.

HOTCOG staff will notify potential applicants of the opportunity to apply for grant funding in advance of the application period. Notifications shall include, at a minimum, the name of the funding opportunity, instructions for viewing the Request for Applications posted on the OOG-PSO's eGrants website, the OOG-PSO's eGrants website address - <https://egrants.gov.texas.gov>,

and due dates for the submission of applications for the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP). Notifications will be made by posting all relevant grant and grant application information on the regional preparedness website (<http://www.hotready.com/emergency-management-2/homeland-security-grant-program-resource-kit>). Furthermore, current grantees, other requestors within the HOTCOG region, and all municipal and county governments with a population of 2,500 or more will be notified by formal letter to the address of record, notifying each jurisdiction's Chief Elected Official, emergency management coordinator, police department/sheriff's office, and fire department points of contact. Jurisdictions will be encouraged to contact HOTCOG staff for additional information about the grant application process, including any information regarding procedures or deadlines that are not included in the grant application kit.

2. Strategic Vision.

The HOTCOG's strategic vision related to homeland security issues is identified in the region's Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA), State Preparedness Report (SPR), and Texas Homeland Security Strategic Plan-Implementation Plan (HSSP-IP). Applicants for grant funds shall demonstrate participation in the HOTCOG region's THIRA/SPR/HSSP-IP process or describe how the application addresses a Homeland Security priority as identified in the plan. For more information on the THIRA/SPR/HSSP-IP or for a copy of the THIRA/SPR/HSSP-IP, jurisdictions should contact HOTCOG staff.

3. Application Workshop.

All applicants are required to attend a **mandatory HOTCOG** grant application workshop for the effective grant year. An independent grant writer may attend but must be accompanied by someone from the applying organization. HOTCOG staff will notify local jurisdictions of the dates, times, and locations of the grant application workshop(s). At the workshop, application kits and other required forms will be distributed to those in attendance. If an applicant cannot attend a workshop, then a one-on-one application training session may be requested by the applicant. If HOTCOG staff are able to accommodate the session, it will be scheduled at the convenience of the HOTCOG staff. Attendees will be provided an application kit consisting of an overview of the application process, timelines, scoring instruments and other information needed to complete the grant application. Pursuant to the *Interlocal Cooperation Agreement Between the Office of the Governor and the Heart of Texas Council of Governments*, content of the application workshop will include eligibility; requirements for project summary; problem statement; existing capability levels; capability gaps; impact statement; homeland security priority action; project activity; performance measures; milestones; budget categories and line items; identified project periods; applicable rules, regulations, and certifications required for the funding opportunity; any existing prohibitions stated in the HSGP Request for Applications; civil rights rules related to applicant employees and projects or activities; State strategies or funding preferences; regionally identified priorities; local policies and procedures that affect the COG's prioritization process; and due dates for applicants to submit and certify applications for the funding opportunity.

Note: It is the regional policy that no jurisdiction or agency may submit more than (3) three

OOG-PSO applications annually with the following exception; if one of the applications is an approved regional priority, (4) four applications total may be submitted.

4. Grant Application.

HOTCOG staff can provide technical assistance to potential grantees by telephone or by a personal visit. Technical assistance may be provided any time during the year as needed by the grantee. The potential grantee needs to thoroughly and carefully read the grant application in order to ensure that all requirements of grantees can be met by the jurisdiction.

5. Application Deadlines.

Application submission deadlines will be announced each year for the grant programs funded through the Public Safety Office (OOG-PSO) of the Office of the Governor. HOTCOG staff will notify potential grantees of the application deadlines. Final applications will be submitted directly to OOG-PSO via eGrants.

6. Application Procedure After Submission.

After submitting grant applications to OOG-PSO through eGrants, OOG-PSO will review the grant applications for eligibility. Applications found ineligible will not be considered by EPAC. Those applications that are eligible will be forwarded to HOTCOG staff for review and prioritization by the EPAC.

Application presentation order for EPAC Scoring will be drawn, by application from a hat. All applicants will be notified before the EPAC meeting of the order and estimated time of their presentation.

7. Prioritization by EPAC.

Eligible applications received from OOG-PSO will be reviewed and prioritized by the EPAC. All potential grantees applying for funds must attend the EPAC prioritization meeting. Potential grantees that do not attend and present their project will receive a “0” zero score on the appropriate EPAC Scoring Sheet line item related to the applicant’s presenter. Each applicant will be allowed 5 minutes to present and 5 minutes for member questions/discussion. Following the completion of the 10 minute time period, members will prioritize and score the application. Applications will be prioritized and scored based on current COG policies and bylaws; eligibility, reasonableness, and cost-effectiveness of the proposed project; homeland security priorities identified through the COG’s risk informed project prioritization methodology; reoccurring and long-term costs; and any state strategies identified by the OOG-PSO. EPAC members are prohibited from discussing scoring of the grants with grantees from the application due date until the review and ranking has been completed. The following procedures apply to application prioritization:

- a) EPAC will utilize the approved HOTCOG SHSP Score Sheet for scoring and ranking projects.
- b) Conflict of Interest – EPAC members may not score an application submitted by an

- agency or jurisdiction in which they are, whether actual or perceived to be:
- i. Employed, work for, or represent the applicant agency or jurisdiction;
 - ii. Related to the member within the third degree by consanguinity or within the second degree by affinity;
 - iii. Serving on any governing board that oversees the unit, division, or agency;
 - iv. Owns or controls any interest in a business entity or non-government organization that benefits, directly or indirectly, from the activities with the applicant agency;
 - or
 - v. Receives any funds, or a substantial amount of tangible goods from the applicant agency as a result of the grant, if awarded.
- c) Regional Priorities – Up to ten (10) points may be awarded on the scoring sheet for projects that address the regional priorities. The following are the region’s priorities, as approved by EPAC:
- i. Regional Emergency Notification System (ENS)
 - ii. COG Regional Planning
 - iii. Citizen Corps Program
 - iv. Regional Special Response Teams and Equipment
 - v. Land-Mobile Radio (LMR) Communication System Infrastructure
- d) Final Project Score – The highest and lowest score will be removed for each application and a final project score calculated as the average from the remaining scores.
- e) Tie Scores – Ties scores between projects will be broken by removing the remaining highest and lowest score and computing a new final project score, based on the calculation method above, for the tied projects. This procedure will continue until the tie is broken.
- f) All individual application scores for each project will be computed by COG staff and the results provided to all members. All scoring sheets and documents are subject to the Public Information Act.
- g) Once determined, EPAC members will review the final scoring and ranking list. Starting with the highest ranked and continuing through all applications, EPAC members will review and determine a recommended funding amount for each application. Any changes in the application funding amount must be via a motion and include the reason for the change and be approved by a majority individual voice vote.
- In order to meet the regional Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Activities (LETPA) funding requirement in which 25% of all SHSP funds must be allocated to support LETPA projects, the EPAC may modify the recommended funding amount as necessary in a manner that funds projects in order to meet the LETPA requirement. Project ranking is determined solely by application scoring and is not subject to change.

8. Executive Committee.

The recommended EPAC project ranking and allocation list will be presented to the HOTCOG Executive Committee as soon as possible following the EPAC prioritization meeting. The Executive Committee will approve, disapprove, or modify the prioritization recommendations of the EPAC. HOTCOG staff will submit the Executive Committee’s final ranking list and how each member scored and voted on each eligible application to the Office of the Governor’s Public Safety Office.

9. Notification of Applicants Regarding Funding Decisions.

HOTCOG staff will notify all applicants of the approved priorities in writing within fourteen (14) calendar days of the Executive Committee's decisions. The notice must state: "After the EPAC prioritizes the grant applications and the COG's governing body approves the priority listing, the COG submits the priority listing to OOG-PSO. Based upon the COG's priority listing, OOG-PSO will verify the eligibility, reasonableness and cost-effectiveness strategy of the proposed project, and the availability of funding, and will render final funding decisions on these grant applications. The COG will notify grantees of any changes in the funding recommendations.

10. Funding Decisions Made by OOG-PSO.

After review by OOG-PSO, a decision to completely fund, partially fund, or deny funds for the grant application will be made by OOG-PSO. These decisions are completely at the discretion of OOG-PSO. Once the final funding decision is made, OOG-PSO will notify the applicant directly either with a Statement of Grant Award or with a denial letter.

11. Post Award Grant Management Workshop.

HOTCOG staff will provide a post award grant management workshop. The workshop will discuss, in detail, the grant management and reporting requirements for OOG-PSO. Attendance is not mandatory but recommended.

Updated: September 26, 2019

EPAC Approval:

Tom Hemrick, EPAC Chairman

Date: _____

HOTCOG Executive Committee Approval:

Judge Don Pool, Executive Committee President
Executive Committee Signature

Date: _____