

**LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL COG-21**

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**Homeland Security Advisory Committee**  
**Policy & Procedures for Grants**  
FY 2021-22



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## **THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR’S HOMELAND SECURITY GRANTS DIVISION AND THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (COG-21)**

The Office of the Governor's (OOG) Homeland Security Grants Division (HSGD) is the entity responsible for administering and awarding a number of grant programs across the State of Texas. The grant funding assists Texas jurisdictions in building, sustaining, and delivering core capabilities to further the National Preparedness Goal which is, “A *secure and resilient Nation with capabilities required across the whole community to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk.*” The OOG has the final decision on any project, including those administered by the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) COG-21. The LRGVDC is one of twenty-four Councils of Government in the State of Texas and is the liaison between the OOG and local jurisdictions in the three-county region, which includes the counties of Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy.

### **POLICIES AUTHORITY**

The following policies and procedures will govern the LRGVDC’s Homeland Security Advisory Committee’s (HSAC) application review and prioritization process for designated funding sources. In addition, these policies and procedures will govern the operation of LRGVDC’s Homeland Security planning as outlined in the Interlocal Cooperation Agreement between the OOG’s Homeland Security Grants Division and the LRGVDC. These policies are reviewed annually to align with local, regional and state guidelines.

### **HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HSAC)**

The HSAC was created as a voluntary unincorporated association of the LRGVDC in November 2004. The HSAC is composed of 14 member jurisdictions. The primary responsibility of the HSAC is to assist the LRGVDC in the development, implementation, review, and update of a comprehensive plan to serve the needs of the region in the event of terrorist activities, natural disaster, and man-made disasters; and to evaluate and make recommendations on grant applications submitted by jurisdictions.

*The 3-county member representation for HSAC is:*

*Cameron – 5*

*Hidalgo – 7*

*Willacy - 2*

### **FUNDING SOURCES**

The HSAC will prioritize the following funding HSGD funding sources:

- Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Activities (LETPA)
- State Homeland Security Program (SHSP)

The purpose of this funding is to support state, tribal, and local preparedness activities that address high-priority preparedness gaps across all core capabilities where a *nexus to terrorism* exists.

### **GRANT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

All applicants regardless of funding status must meet **ALL** the necessary requirements as set forth by the OOG’s HSGD’s Request for Funding Announcement (RFA), no exceptions.

The LRGVDC’s Homeland Security staff and the HSAC shall ensure that the funding recommendations on applications are based on the following factors: the LRGVDC’s THIRA (Threats and Hazards Identification and Risk Assessment) & SPR (Stakeholder Preparedness Review), the LRGVDC’s Implementation Plan, regional impact, deployability, reasonableness, and cost effectiveness.

**MANDATORY WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE**

The LRGVDC’s Homeland Security staff shall conduct one grant application workshop for the Homeland Security Grants Division funding opportunities. Applicants are required to attend the mandatory grant application workshop. Representatives can be any of the three grant designated officials (Authorized Official, Financial Officer or Project Director). For this grant process, a consultant or contracted grant writer cannot be the sole representative for the applying jurisdiction or agency.

**ACTIVITY AREAS**

Grant project applications must support one of the following activity areas for the LRGVDC COG-21 Region, in no order:

|  |
|--|
| Interoperable Emergency Communications   |
| Support of First Responder Capabilities<br><i>*For grant-related purposes, a Special Response Team must:<br/>                 1) indicate FEMA Type capability (if applicable) or<br/>                 if SWAT, indicate type according to the<br/>                 National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA) SWAT Standards<br/>                 2) have some type of formal cooperation in place. i.e. MOU (Memorandum of Understanding); SOP (Standard Operating Procedures); Bylaws; or written agreement.<br/>                 A copy must be submitted, or on file, with the LRGVDC’s Homeland Security program.</i> |
| Emergency Operations Centers and Technology  |
| Planning and Community Preparedness  |

**NATIONAL PRIORITIES AREAS**

The COG will fund a minimum of 5% of the total regional allocation to the following areas, for a minimum total of 20%:

|  |
|--|
| Addressing Emerging Threats                      |
| Enhancing Cybersecurity                          |
| Protection of Soft Targets/Crowded Places        |
| Information and Intelligence Sharing/Cooperation |

**RISK METHODOLOGY**

A percentage of funding for each project serves as a guideline in determining the selection of grant project applications that address the needs of the LRGVDC (COG-21) Region.

| ACTIVITY AREAS:                            | LETPA PERCENTAGE: | SHSP PERCENTAGE: |
|--|-------------------|------------------|
| Interoperable Emergency Communications     | 25%               | 25%              |
| Support of First Responder Capabilities    | 25%               | 25%              |
| Emergency Operations Center and Technology | 25%               | 25%              |
| Planning and Community Preparedness        | 25%               | 25%              |

**REGIONAL IMPACT AND DEPLOYABILITY**

Grant projects must have a *regional* impact to the LRGVDC COG-21 Region. Any projects/equipment funded by HSGP must be deployable. Certain exceptions may apply, for example (but not limited to) fixed assets, radio towers, repeaters, etc.

### **LRGVDC THIRA AND SPR**

All applications for projects must be consistent with the capability targets of the current LRGVDC's THIRA (Threats and Hazards Identification and Risk Assessment) process, as well as gaps identified in the LRGVDC's SPR (Stakeholder Preparedness Report). Please contact COG staff for a copy.

### **LRGVDC IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

All applications for projects must be consistent with goals and objectives of the LRGVDC's Implementation Plan.

The LRGVDC's Implementation Plan supports the Texas Homeland Security Strategic Plan. It establishes priority actions with specific performance measures to be completed by milestones established in the plan. The plan is a roadmap for homeland security preparedness and identifies the resources required to implement the plan. These documents can be found on the LRGVDC's website, under the Homeland Security program section.

### **PROCEDURES FOR GRANT APPLICATION SUBMITTAL**

All applications shall be submitted electronically via the OOG's online grant management system, **e-Grants**: <https://egrants.gov.texas.gov/fundopp.aspx> All submission deadlines are determined by the Office of the Governor's Homeland Security Grants Division.

### **INELEGIBLE GRANT APPLICATIONS**

Applications created on e-Grants but not certified by the Authorized Officials will not be considered valid and will be denied by the OOG's HSGD. The OOG's HSGD reserves the right to deny applications that do not meet the guidelines for LETPA or SHSP grants.

### **HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HSAC) GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW**

The HSAC will review and score project applications for the LRGVDC (COG-21) Region.

### **PRIORITIZATION PROCESS**

HSAC members will review and score project applications. Members will use a scoring instrument to record application scoring. The scoring instrument is reviewed and updated annually to align with local, regional and state guidelines. A copy of the scoring tool can be found on COG's website. Only LRGVDC's Homeland Security staff will compute scores. Depending on ongoing health and safety factors, the prioritization meeting will be either online or in person. Applicants will be notified of the prioritization meeting, but attendance will not be a requirement.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The COG shall ensure that members of the COG's governing body, the HSAC, and COG staff abstain from scoring and voting on any grant application other than a grant application submitted by a COG, during the prioritization process if the member or an individual related to the member within the third degree by consanguinity or within the second degree by affinity:

- a. Is employed by the applicant agency and works for the unit or division that would administer the grant, if awarded;
- b. Serves on any governing board that oversees the unit or division that would administer the grant, if awarded;
- c. Owns or controls any interest in a business entity or other non-governmental organization that benefits, directly or indirectly, from activities with the applicant agency;
- d. Receives any funds, or a substantial amount of tangible goods or routine services, from the applicant agency as a result of the grant, if awarded.

If a HSAC member has a conflict of interest regarding a grant application, the COG will ensure that the committee member abstains from voting, commenting, or otherwise influencing the prioritization process for that application. If any applicant, HSAC member, COG personnel, or other individual, has reason to believe that favoritism or inappropriate actions occurred during the scoring or prioritization of PSO/HSGD projects, the COG shall ensure that the concerns are shared with PSO/HSGD as soon as possible.

### **FUNDING RECOMMENDATION GUIDELINES**

The HSAC reserves the right to recommend an amount less than the requested amount based on the budget cost effectiveness, reasonableness, and/or previous grant performance under present/past funding sources.

The COG/HSAC reserves the right to deny recommendations for funding on any application based on but not limited to:

- ineligible activity not permitted under the funding source
- ineligible line item(s) not permitted under the funding source
- project does not align with regional priorities
- eligibility criteria not met by applicant

All project grant applications prioritized by the HSAC are **conditionally approved** until the OOG's HSGD gives the final approval.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS OF CONDITIONALLY APPROVED GRANT APPLICATION PROJECTS TO LRGVDC EXECUTIVE BOARD**

The HSAC's recommended list of prioritized projects will be submitted to the LRGVDC's Board of Directors for review. The LRGVDC's Board of Directors reserves the right to endorse or disallow the HSAC's recommendations. COG staff shall notify all applicants of the approved priorities within (14) calendar days of board's approval.

\*The OOG's HSGD, however, will make the final approval on all conditionally approved projects.

### **FINAL REVIEW BY OOG'S HOMELAND SECURITY GRANTS DIVISION**

The prioritized list of conditionally approved projects recommended for funding by the LRGVDC (COG-21) will be forwarded to the OOG by COG staff. If there are discrepancies on project grant applications, the OOG's HSGD staff will contact the applicant directly. All funding decisions made by the OOG's HSGD's Executive Director are final.

### **APPEALS PROCESS**

An applicant may appeal the actions of the HSAC based on procedural violation(s). The appeal must be submitted in writing to the LRGVDC's Board of Director's Chair within ten (10) regular business days from the date of the email notification. Please note that appeals cannot be based on areas of discretion in the HSAC's scoring criteria. Appeals made regarding an HSAC decision will be handled by the LRGVDC only.

The OOG's HSGD does not accept or provide an appeals process. If an applicant appeals a decision to the OOG's HSGD, the applicant will be requested to go back to their regional council of government for resolution.