

**Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
Homeland Security Advisory Committee
Policies, Procedures & Scoring Criteria
FY 2027-2028**



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LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL COG-21

Homeland Security Advisory Committee

By Laws, Policies, Procedures and Scoring Criteria for Grants

FY 2027-2028

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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. As a local requirement, all projects must also include language/verbiage that indicates that a project is scalable (reduce total by 10, 20, 30 or other percentage) in order to allow for greater funding opportunities to other regional projects.

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 ATTENDANCE

The LRGVDC's Homeland Security staff shall conduct one grant application workshop for the Homeland Security Grants Division funding opportunities. All applicants are required to attend the mandatory grant application workshop. Representatives can be any of the three grant authorized 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. Either of the authorized officials or a representative that is knowledgeable of the project is also required to attend the privatization meeting and must be ready to provide a three minute presentation to the HSAC, the date is to be determined once grant applications are batched back to the LRGVDC Homeland Security Staff.

ACTIVITY AREAS

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

Interoperable Emergency Communications
Support of First Responder Capabilities <i>*For grant-related purposes, a Special Response Team must:</i> 1) indicate FEMA Type capability (if applicable) or if SWAT, indicate type according to the National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA) SWAT Standards 2) have some type of formal cooperation in place. i.e., MOU (Memorandum of Understanding); SOP (Standard Operating Procedures); Bylaws; or written agreement. <i>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 30% percentage of the total regional allocation to the following areas:

Combating Domestic Violent Extremism	7.5%
Enhancing Cybersecurity	7.5%
Protection of Soft Targets/Crowded Places	5%
Intelligence and Information Sharing/Cooperation	5%
Addressing Emerging Threats	5%

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	15%	15%
Support of First Responder Capabilities	15%	15%
Emergency Operations Centers and Technology	5%	10%
Planning and Community Preparedness	NA	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. Monetary limit on radios, regardless of manufacture up to \$4000 for portable and \$5000 for mobile and all radios must be LTE Compliant.



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 project applications. Members will use a review sheet to record points. The review sheet is reviewed and updated annually to align with local, regional, and state guidelines. A copy of the review sheet can be found on COG's website. Only LRGVDC's Homeland Security staff will tabulate points on review sheets.

Depending on ongoing health and safety factors, the prioritization meeting will be held person only. A virtual option will only be authorized by the Chairperson if needed. The authorized official, financial director, project director, grant wrighter or a representative that is knowledgeable of the project is required to attend the prioritization meeting and must be ready to provide a maximum three minute presentation to the HSAC, the date is to be determined once grant applications are batched back to the LRGVDC Homeland Security Staff.

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 oversee 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 an 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 entity's specific project. 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

TIE BREAKING PROCEDURES

The highest and lowest score will be removed and recalculated to obtain the new aggregated score and will not affect the overall rankings of all the other applicants.

Notice to all applicants: 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 (30) 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.

HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SHSP&LETPA Application Scoring Sheet

Funding Opportunity:		Date:	
Agency/Jurisdiction:			
Project Title:		Regional:	
Presenter:		LETPA:	
Amount Requested:		NPA:	

Regional Priorities (40 points)

Question	Scale	Score
How well does the project address the gaps and capability targets within the LRGVDC region's Stakeholder Preparedness Report (SPR) and Threat Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and Implementation Plan (IP)?	0-10	
Does the project sustain an existing capability?	0-10	
Is this project identified as a regional priority?	Yes = 10 No = 0	
Does the application document a benefit to other agencies/ organizations through written agreements, contracts, or plans?	0-10	

State and Federal Requirements (30 points)

Question	Scale	Score
Does the project provide a clear nexus to terrorism?	0-10	
Does the project confidently address one or more core capabilities identified within its corresponding activity area as determined by the Request For Assistance (RFA)?	0-10	
Is this project a national priority area (NPA)?	Yes = 5 No = 0	
Is this project a law enforcement terrorism prevention activity (LETPA)?	Yes = 5 No = 0	

Application & Project Effectiveness (30 points)

Question	Scale	Score
Is the project, as well as its goals, activities, and milestones reasonable and necessary?	0-10	
Will the project's funding according to its budget line items adequately accomplish the stated goals of the project?	0-10	
Was a representative/presenter from the applicant agency at the scoring meeting and knowledgeable about the project?	0-10	

Project Total: _____

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**HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SHSP&LETPA Application Scoring Sheet**

Funding Opportunity:		Date:	
Agency/Jurisdiction:			
Project Title:		Regional:	
Presenter:		LETPA:	
Amount Requested:		NPA:	

Vote Exemption Status

Per the Homeland Security Advisory Committee bylaws and the requirements established by the State of Texas Office of the Governor's (OOG) Homeland Security Grant Division (HSGD), no committee member from the applicant agency may vote on a project. While a member of the committee may present a project application for funding consideration, no member shall advocate or attempt to influence the committee concerning their jurisdiction's application after their presentation or during the scoring/ranking process.

☐ I am not employed by or directly affiliated with the applicant agency.
☐ I am either employed by or am directly affiliated with the applicant agency and therefore cannot vote or provide comment or discussion on the project.
Comments:

Member Voting Agreement

I, as a member of the Homeland Security Advisory Committee Advisory Committee, hereby agree that I have scored this application in honesty and fairness, without duress or influence from external parties. I further agree that all comments and scores are my own. I agree that I understand the bylaws, scoring practices, and funding process of this committee and agree to the requirements established by the Office of the Governor's Homeland Security Grant Division.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

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