

Regional Transit Security Working Group (RTSWG)
FY 2011 TSGP Grant Program Questions and Answers

Q: What is the difference between the June 27 and July 5 application deadlines?

A: The June 27 deadline is to submit your agency's SF-424 form in grants.gov. The SF-424 information will be transferred to the ND Grants system. The full application, including the investment justification (IJ) and budget is due in ND Grants no later than 11:59 PM Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on July 5, 2011.

Q: Is there any way to raise the operational cap? Is there a limit on what the percentage could be?

A: The Secretary of DHS does have the authority to waive the operational cap, if justified. Once we receive and review all of the applications, we will see how many operational projects are recommended for funding, and present the information to the Secretary so she can determine whether to waive the cap. There is no specified limit on a waiver amount; rather it would be informed by the projects recommended for funding.

Q: How do you define a "complete" remediation plan? My agency's design documents and engineering studies are hundreds of pages; do we need to submit these documents in their entirety?

A: The plan must address the entirety of the asset, not just a portion. It must identify vulnerabilities for the entire asset, and identify corrective/mitigation actions with projected costs and timelines. Also, you must be in process with EHP documentation, so that mitigation efforts can begin soon after the grant is awarded. There is also a "Remediation Plan Guide" beginning on page 44 of the TSGP Guidance and Application Kit to help you determine if your plan is complete.

While there is no limit to the attachments you can submit with your application in ND Grants, we ask that wherever possible, you provide summary-level information for assessments, engineering studies and similar reports to facilitate the review process.

Q: Is there a character limit in the Investment Justification template?

A: No, the IJ template is an MS Word document and the sections do not have a pre-set character limit. However, we encourage you to be concise – using a bulleted format for example – when writing your applications.

Q: My agency is getting close to the three-year update window for our Security Plan. What updates are required to meet this eligibility requirement for TSGP?

A: There are not specific requirements for Security Plan updates; but we would expect that you include any information related to risk assessments conducted since the last update, that all of the system and operating environment information is still current, and the security protocols in the plan are current.

Additionally, if your agency has had a BASE review within the last three years, the BASE can also be used to meet this eligibility requirement.

Q: How will the National Review Panels (NRP) evaluate the Investment Justifications (IJs)?

A: The NRP will be made up of federal government subject matter experts. They will review and score the IJs based on the criteria laid out in the grant guidance. All projects will be evaluated based on Risk Score Group, Alignment to Funding Priority Areas, Risk Mitigation Score and Regional collaboration (where appropriate).

The Risk Mitigation Score is an average of several components. All projects will be evaluated on Cost Effectiveness, Ability to Reduce Catastrophic Events, Timelines, and Sustainability without Additional Federal Funds. Funding Priority A projects will also be evaluated on their BASE Review Alignment. Priority C and D projects will also be evaluated for their Effectiveness in Remediating Top Transit List Assets.

The NRP may make funding recommendations other than the requested amount if ineligible expenses are listed as part of the budget. Final scores and funding recommendations are ranked and projects are funded in rank order until the funding allocation is exhausted.

Q: How would the risk group score be treated if we submitted a regional project (one agency applies on the behalf of multiple agencies in the region)?

A: The highest risk group score of the agencies would be used. For example, if there are three agencies in your region with risk group scores of 2, 3, and 4, then the regional project would receive the risk group score of 4.

Q: Is hiring a consultant to assist with the update of our Regional Transit Security Strategy (RTSS) allowable?

A: Yes, that is an allowable project. However, given that awards will not be made for the FY 2011 cycle until September, and that the RTSS updates are due by December 31, 2011, there may not be enough time between when the awards are issued and the RTSS update is due to pay for it with FY 2011 funds.

Q: How should we write-up our requests for “overtime” patrols? If we apply for an event of regional significance, does it need to be a National Special Security Event (NSSE)? How should we justify our request?

A: You should identify any significant events (Republican or Democratic National Conventions, Super Bowl, etc.) as well as any significant time periods (e.g., major holidays) when you may need to be on heightened alert. While the events should be significant, they do not need to be NSSE-level events. Write up these events/timeframes, identifying the number of officers and overtime hours you anticipate needing. You cannot just ask for a lump-sum number for events to be determined in the future, but justify your request with specific events/dates, hours, and overtime rates.

Q: How would the risk group score be treated if we submitted a regional project (one agency applies on the behalf of multiple agencies in the region)? If the agencies included in the application have different risk scores, is the project’s risk score affected by which agency submits the application?

A: The highest risk group score of the agencies would be used. This is not impacted by which of the agencies submit the investment justification as long as all the agencies participating in the regional project are clearly noted. For example, if there are three agencies in your region with risk group scores of 2, 3, and 4, then the regional project would receive the risk group score of 4.

Q: Do you expect that the DHS Secretary will raise the 10% operational cap? Is there a limit on what the percentage could be?

A: The Secretary of DHS does have the authority to waive the operational cap, if justified. We cannot determine in advance whether this will be possible until after we receive and review all of the applications. Following this, we will see how many operational projects are recommended for funding, and present the information to the Secretary so she can determine whether to waive the cap. There is no specified limit on a waiver amount; rather it would be informed by the projects recommended for funding.

Q: Do all public awareness handouts and print items need to reference that they were purchased with DHS grants?

A: Yes, all public awareness items should say on them somewhere: "Purchased with Department of Homeland Security Grant Funding."