

Continuity Funding: Focus on Function

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For the many elements of planning, training, and infrastructure that make up sound continuity of government (COG), there are many varied funding sources. However, with the exception of the State Homeland Security Grants Program (and of course the corresponding and increasingly scrutinized Urban Areas Security Initiative), there is no definitive, "COG" grant at the federal or state levels. Partly due to the broad interpretability of the term and partly due to the many functions of government it touches, continuity funding is typically relegated to the specific function, institution, or critical infrastructure it helps secure.

Funding for COG is allowed under the 2004 State Homeland Security Grants Program (SHSGP), in the areas of planning, equipment, and exercises, but even with billions of dollars available nationwide under this program, most states and local governments still need additional funding to enable them to fully implement a broad-based and deployable strategy. Moreover, in many cases, the state or local government is compelled to spend the lion's share of its DHS funding on some of the many other items allowed under the SHSGP. The good news is that there are a significant number of supplemental funding programs that fund projects which can serve the dual benefit of enhancing day-to-day operations, while at the same time fulfilling a back-up role as a COG element, in place and ready to roll out at the onset of a disaster, man-made or otherwise.

Use DHS funding for crosscutting activities

Regional or jurisdiction-wide planning does not fall easily into other (non-SHSGP) funding priorities, because it involves so many different types of agencies and services- a notable exception is the Department of Education's School Emergency Preparedness Planning Program. Therefore, you're probably better off using your available DHS funding to support crosscutting activities, like broad-based planning, that involve all of the critical players in your COG scenario.

Once you have developed a multi-agency plan that includes how participants will mobilize in the event of a disaster as well as what they need to manage the process and effect a seamless transition, each

participating agency will have the documentation it needs to individually seek funding from the sources with which they are most familiar. Your planning may involve representatives from police, fire, emergency medical services, information technology, education, public works, records management, public health, and transportation, to name a few. These all have other function-specific programs they can tap to build their capacity to participate in COG, and they will all benefit by having documentation of their role in the coordinated plan, as they begin to tap their funding prospects.

Use planning funds to build funding intelligence

Just as planning funds can be used to research best practices for COG deployment, most programs will allow you to devote staff time or contractual dollars toward the development of function-specific funding information and grants development support that will help the participants to fulfill their critical roles in your joint continuity plan. A small investment of time and resources can lead to significant payoffs in terms of resources the COG colleagues have to apply to the project.

COG resources by function

Here are some ideas for funding sources that correspond to the types of functions described above. All of these sources could potentially fund continuity operations planning and deployment, in one form or another, but only for the types of agencies that are eligible to apply to them:

Police and other public safety officials are able to obtain funds primarily from the Department of Justice (DOJ). The Byrne and Local Law Enforcement Block Grants have wide latitude in funding the needs of local police departments. DOJ also funds law enforcement technology and communications, and redundancy built in for continuity equals excess capacity day-to-day.

Fire departments, of course, can apply for the USFA Assistance to Firefighters program. This program may reach \$750 million again in 2005, by the time it passes Congress, but there's still a fair amount of work to be done in the meantime.

In the past, emergency medical services providers were funded under the USFA program, and this remains a solid EMS funder. Now that EMS has been combined with fire operations and firefighter safety category, departments no longer have to choose between funding their EMS and funding the rest of the department. As expected, this has proven to be a very positive step for EMS teams across the country.

Information technology, which could be a prominent feature in every COG plan, is typically funded as a component of the functional application being submitted by a specific agency. Unfortunately, COG-critical configurations like remote storage, IP-based communication, and Video teleconferencing only find broad-based funding support in the Agency-focused programs. (There are exceptions, but the programs tend to be small and highly competitive or scientific).

Education has joined in homeland defense in a substantial way with its School Emergency Preparedness Planning grants program, which requires the involvement of major community stakeholders, services providers, and first responders in planning for a disaster—a good complement to DHS-funded COG planning.

Electronic records that are backed-up remotely remain the most disaster resilient. COG deployment relies on seamless access to government records from the moment disaster strikes. The Federal and State Archives Administrations have funds available to make and maintain government records electronically. In New York, it's called the Local Government Records Management Improvement Fund.

CDC/HRSA bioterror and hospital preparedness funds have been a boon to continuity of public health. Because they are state-administered, though, each state handles the funding differently, so you'll have to check with your state department of health for the appropriate contact.

Finally, the much-beleaguered funding transportation generally and continuity in particular now resides under DHS (for transportation security) and the pending Department of Transportation Appropriation (for such critical factors as intelligent transportation systems and highway maintenance).

Taken as a whole, these funds can help you develop a sound plan and build the infrastructure you will need to carry it out if and when it becomes necessary.