

## **The New(er) Face of DHS Funding for State and Local Governments**

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Like many one-year-olds in 2004, the Department of Homeland Security is beginning to get its feet under it. Shedding the vestiges of its previously more independent component agencies has been an ongoing struggle as the DHS leadership works toward creating a separate and legitimate identity for the new Department without alienating the majority of its staffers and stakeholders who came from somewhere other than DHS. This process of development and change has also taken its toll on other DHS stakeholders, particularly those in state and local government who rely on the Department, its administrative order, and its leadership to help them navigate this new landscape of homeland security funding. That said, there is positive news for first responders in some of the latest developments at the Department.

For the first time since the creation of DHS nearly a year and a half ago, state and local first responders and homeland security officials now have their own single office at DHS, dedicated to administering their funding programs, addressing their specific needs, and advocating for them within the emerging Department bureaucracy. Specifically, the Office of State and Local Government Coordination (including staff from the Transportation Security Administration and the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate) and the Office for Domestic Preparedness (i.e., the people who administer the First Responder funding) have been combined into the new Office for State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness (OSLGCP). This consolidation seeks to alleviate the repetitive application process for preparedness grants and provides a single entry point into the Department for state and local first responders. The creation of this new office will also allow for better coordination of all preparedness grants, preventing possible duplication of funding.

If this "One Stop Shop" functions as planned, OSLGCP will become a valuable addition to a growing list of federal funding process improvements that include the more recent grants.gov Website and go back to the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act of 1999 and beyond. As anyone who has worked with government can attest, it really is no small feat to convince these agencies to set

aside their own long-standing traditions to consider how to develop a better, more coordinated way of doing business.

It will be a gradual transition, with the new Office for State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness providing a single entry point for grant application, and the policy and operational experts remaining with their original agencies. OSLGCP will house the “back office” functions of grants awarding and administration and have *some* policy and program direction. Beyond grants, DHS plans to give OSLGCP purview over technical assistance and evaluations, training, exercises, as well as departmental leadership in the standards-setting HSPD-8 (“Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8”) effort.

Like the grants.gov implementation, OSLGCP will probably require a ramping up period of as much as a year before it is fully functional and responsive to everyone who might need its support, but it certainly is a laudable move for the newest and (arguably) most agile major federal funding agency.

If you’re wondering what will become of the old Department of Justice/Office for Domestic Preparedness Helpline (1-800-368-6498), don’t worry. OSLGCP intends to continue that service during, and after, its transition.

Note: The full text of HSPD-8 is available at:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/12/20031217-6.html>