



## **Border Interoperability Demonstration Project Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. What is the purpose of the Border Interoperability Demonstration Project?**

The purpose of the Border Interoperability Demonstration Project (BIDP) is to help States and localities explore innovative and effective interoperable emergency communications systems and approaches that may be used to improve emergency communications along and across U.S. international borders. As a result, selected border communities may benefit from improved interoperability and may serve as repeatable models for other border communities to achieve greater communications interoperability with domestic and international agencies.

### **2. What are demonstration projects in the context of BIDP?**

Typical demonstration projects develop and test new approaches to solve problems or improve operations. Similarly, BIDP projects should propose innovative models of interoperable emergency communications systems and approaches to be tested through real-world implementation. The focus on lessons learned means that both projects that meet projected outcomes and those that do not can yield valuable information. The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) will work with BIDP participants to document lessons learned, capture challenges and successes, and share information throughout the emergency communications community.

Applicants should consider the broad range of activities that are needed to develop, manage, operate, and maintain interoperable communications effectively, such as those noted in the Interoperability Continuum.<sup>1</sup>

### **3. What legislation authorized funding for BIDP? How much funding is available?**

The *Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007* (Pub. L. No. 110-53) authorized the establishment of the program. The *Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act, 2009* (Pub. L. No. 110-329) provided \$30,000,000 in funding for BIDP to support demonstration projects that will improve interoperability along and across the border, and to provide technical assistance for select projects. A minimum of six border communities (at least three on the U.S.-Canadian border and at least three on the U.S.-Mexican border) will be selected to participate in BIDP. It is anticipated that up to \$4,000,000 may be awarded for each selected project.

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<sup>1</sup> The Interoperability Continuum is available at <http://www.safecomprogram.gov>.

**4. Congress appropriated \$30 million for BIDP funding. Why is only \$25.5 million being made available to grantees?**

The law authorizing BIDP requires OEC to provide technical assistance to selected demonstration projects, identify joint-use equipment, facilitate information sharing among selected communities, validate and share effective solutions with participants and other interested parties. Funding was set aside to meet these statutory requirements for OEC’s significant involvement in demonstration projects.

**5. What value was achieved from OEC retaining this money?**

OEC is the primary office within DHS tasked with improving the operability and interoperability of emergency communications nationwide. Since its creation in 2007, OEC has provided technical assistance, training, policy guidance, and various other forms of expert advice to hundreds of communities. Assisting grant recipients with executing their demonstration projects is the best way to ensure successful and productive use of the grant funds.

**6. What States are eligible to apply for BIDP funding?**

The 17 States with international land and water boundaries that border Canada or Mexico are eligible for BIDP funding, as shown below:

<b>States with International Land and Water Boundaries</b>	
<b>International Boundaries with Canada (13)</b>	<b>International Boundaries with Mexico (4)</b>
Alaska – 1,538 miles	Arizona – 373 miles
Idaho – 45 miles	California – 140 miles
Maine – 611 miles	New Mexico – 180 miles
Michigan – 721 miles	Texas – 1,241 miles
Minnesota – 547 miles	
Montana – 545 miles	
New Hampshire – 58 miles	
New York – 445 miles	
North Dakota – 310 miles	
Ohio – 146 miles	
Pennsylvania – 42 miles	
Vermont – 90 miles	
Washington – 427 miles	

Sources: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, U.S. International Borders: Brief Facts (November 9, 2006) at: <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RS21729.pdf>.

**7. How do I apply for BIDP funding?**

A comprehensive funding opportunity announcement is posted on <http://www.grants.gov>, which includes all instructions and supporting documents for completing and submitting a BIDP application.

## **8. What are eligible activities for BIDP?**

BIDP eligible activities include any planning, training, exercises, or equipment purchases associated with the execution of proposed BIDP projects.

## **9. Is there a matching requirement?**

There is no matching requirement for any costs under the BIDP program.

## **10. BIDP funding is targeted to local and tribal governments and emergency response providers; however, States are the eligible applicants. How does this work?**

Eligible applicants for BIDP funding are State Administrative Agencies (SAAs) of U.S. States bordering Canada or Mexico. Eligible sub-recipients are local and tribal governments and emergency response providers operating within a county or other jurisdiction contiguous to an international border with Canada or Mexico. Sub-recipients may not directly apply for BIDP funding; the SAA is responsible for applying for the funding on behalf of the eligible sub-recipients.

BIDP applications and projects should be a collaborative effort between States and eligible sub-recipients. SAAs and sub-recipients are jointly responsible for developing the project concept, as well as ensuring project eligibility and alignment with the Statewide Communication Interoperability Plans (SCIPs) and other emergency communications plans.

**SAAs are responsible for:** Assembling and submitting the BIDP application, managing and administering BIDP grant funds, passing all BIDP funding to the sub-recipients, reporting on grant activities, and supporting knowledge and information sharing.

**Sub-recipients are responsible for:** Collaborating with all relevant partners and public safety agencies in the region to plan a proposed project; managing and administering BIDP funds; conducting day-to-day management of the project, including proper financial management; reporting on grant activities; and supporting knowledge and information sharing.

## **11. Where can I find my State Administrative Agency?**

A list of designated SAAs that can apply for DHS grants and administer DHS grant funds can be found at: <http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/saa/index.shtm>.

## **12. What are some recommended steps I can take to prepare my BIDP application?**

**Coordinate with potential project partners:** BIDP is focused on innovative ways to improve interoperable emergency communications along and across international borders. Projects will ideally include multiple levels of government and public safety disciplines, international partners, and the private sector, as appropriate. Through early coordination with potential partners, communities can develop project proposals that have broad stakeholder involvement and impact.

**Coordinate with Statewide Interoperability Coordinators (SWICs), SCIP contacts, and Statewide Interoperability Governing Bodies (SIGBs):** In addition to coordination with potential project partners, coordination with SWICs, SCIP contacts, and SIGBs will provide insight into State plans and emergency communications needs. This coordination will allow communities to develop project proposals that address these needs and make State-level entities aware of border communications issues.

**Consider cross-border communications gaps:** An assessment of emergency communications along and across the border may yield valuable insight into current gaps and possible improvements. While projects that focus solely on interoperable emergency communications with domestic partners are eligible to receive funding, the intent of BIDP is to improve border-related interoperable emergency communications and include international partners.

**Review internal processes for managing BIDP funding:** By reviewing internal management and administrative (M&A) processes, agencies selected for the BIDP grant may ensure they are able to address the administrative tasks required to appropriately manage BIDP funding if awarded.

**NOTE:** The BIDP funding opportunity is **competitive**. Therefore, OEC will not be able to assist prospective applicants with any aspect of their application or pre-application coordination.

### **13. What technical assistance will OEC provide?**

OEC will provide technical assistance for selected projects **after award**. Anticipated technical assistance includes service offerings in the OEC Technical Assistance Catalog, available at: [http://www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/library/interoperabilitybasics/1384\\_oectechnical.htm](http://www.safecomprogram.gov/SAFECOM/library/interoperabilitybasics/1384_oectechnical.htm). In addition, OEC may provide customized technical assistance on a project-by-project basis for activities such as workshops, webinars, training, or site visits.

### **14. When will BIDP awards be announced?**

Applicants have 60 days to complete and submit their applications. Following submission, all BIDP applications will go through a multi-step, comprehensive review. At the conclusion of the review process, OEC will select projects to be funded. This entire process is expected to take six months.

### **15. What is included in the 20-page limit for the application?**

The Project Description for each project must not exceed 20 pages in length. The overall Project Narrative for each project must include a Project Description, Management Plan, Project Budget, and Budget Narrative in accordance with application instructions. Further, all components of the application must be typewritten in Times New Roman 12 point font with 1" margins, on 8.5" x 11" paper, and must include page numbers.

The SAA Management Plan, M&A Budget, M&A Budget Narrative, and additional attachments such as agreements, evidence of compliance, and letters of support are not subject to page limits.

## **16. Will multi-State applications or projects be accepted?**

Multi-State coordination is encouraged. However, only one State SAA can serve as the eligible applicant and single point of contact for each grant awarded. The SAA will be responsible for managing all projects under the grant, administering funding under the grant, including pass-through agreements with communities selected for participation in the demonstration project, and for all grant reporting.

## **17. Are State-sponsored projects eligible for funding?**

BIDP authorizing legislation requires a State to, “make the funds available promptly to the local and tribal governments and emergency response providers” selected for participation in the demonstration project. Therefore, projects that are sponsored solely by the State are not eligible for funding. The intent of the program is to provide funding to communities so that they can develop innovative solutions to unique communications issues occurring along the border. However, OEC encourages the SAA to work closely with sub-recipients to strengthen BIDP proposals (e.g., facilitate coordination among jurisdictions, ensure the project aligns with the needs in the SCIP, identify joint-use resources, ensure the project does not interfere with the rebanding occurring along the border), and to ensure compliance with program requirements.

## **18. Are multi-jurisdictional projects eligible for funding?**

Yes, projects that span across jurisdictions (within a State, across State lines, or across international borders), are allowed and encouraged. For multi-jurisdictional projects, the SAA may apply for funding for the entire project and if awarded, pass funds through to an eligible sub-recipient (a local or tribal government or emergency response provider), which will be responsible for administering grant funds. The eligible sub-recipient may manage the project directly or pass funding through to eligible partners. OEC would require that sub-recipients have in place an agreement that requires all sub-recipients to apply the funds, as proposed, toward the multi-jurisdictional project, to submit necessary information for grant reporting, and to certify that no grant funding or grant-funded equipment be transferred to foreign entities.

## **19. Are projects that span across international borders eligible for funding?**

Yes, cross-border projects are eligible for funding and encouraged in order to address the BIDP project objectives. SAAs and eligible sub-recipients are encouraged to coordinate with international partners to develop innovative communication solutions along and across the border. However, grant funding and grant-funded equipment may not be transferred to a foreign entity. Proposed projects that would place grant-funded equipment on foreign soil will be evaluated, and if selected, special terms and conditions regarding ownership and maintenance will be placed on the equipment to protect the Federal interest in the property.

## **20. Are there limits on the types or sizes of documents that can be attached to a BIDP State application?**

DHS has alerted Grants.gov to be ready for very large applications. We have heard informally that the overall file size limit (that is, a single application, including all of its attachments) is about 200 MB.

DHS recommends that you limit the number of scanned documents containing images in your application. Image documents are very large and will inflate the overall file size drastically. We recommend that narratives be provided in word-processing documents, and that budget be provided in spreadsheets or word-processing documents.

DHS realizes that maps and network diagrams (or other image files) may be necessary to document the Project Narratives in an application. We will work with States if large image files are involved in an application. We request that you notify the DHS Grants Officer PRIOR to the application deadline if you anticipate a file size problem.

**21. What do I do if I encounter problems submitting an application through Grants.gov at or prior to the application deadline?**

Contact the Grants.gov help center at [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov) OR 1-800-518-4726. Get an incident number (trouble ticket number). IMMEDIATELY email that number and a BRIEF description of the problem to the DHS Grants Officer. DHS will investigate the problem and work with you regarding application submission.

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*Additional information will be posted on the OEC Website ([www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov); keyword: OEC). Please e-mail any inquiries to [BDP@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:BDP@hq.dhs.gov).*