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GRANTS OFFICE

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Homeland Security Funding Update: Addressing the 9/11 Commission Recommendations

BY VINCE SIRAGUSA, GRANTS DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

In recognition of the tenth anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has recently released its progress report highlighting the achievements that the Department and its many partners have made in carrying out the 9/11 Commission's recommendations. Created in late 2002, this Commission was chartered to prepare a complete account of the circumstances surrounding the September 11, 2001 attacks and to provide recommendations intended to strengthen our nation's well-being and defense from future attacks. Additional information on this August 2004 report is available at [www.9-](http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/index.htm)

The FCC is currently directed to auction commercial licenses for 10 MHz of spectrum known as the "D block" and to deposit the proceeds in the Treasury. S. 911 would reallocate the D block from commercial to public safety uses.

[11commission.gov/report/index.htm](http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/index.htm).

In response to those many suggestions, DHS cites a number of accomplishments (www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/implementing-9-11-commission-report-progress-2011.pdf) that inevitably contribute to our quest for improved safety and security. Included in those actions, we find the creation of dozens of fusion centers throughout the country, increased airport and maritime port security, and greater communication and information sharing with other nations. In spite of these and many other achievements over the last decade, we've been remiss in addressing one of the largest and perhaps most conspicuous of the Commission's calls to action: "Providing for the expedited and increased assignment of radio spectrum for public safety purposes."

With billions of dollars in dedicated grant funding having already come to state and local governments for their interoperability efforts, DHS has successfully implemented many strategies helping to transform and strengthen interoperable

communications across the country. Administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) in collaboration with DHS, the 2007 Public Safety Interoperable Communication Program (PSIC) alone offered nearly \$1 billion in grant funding for the acquisition and deployment of equipment intended to increase emergency communications interoperability.

Along the same lines, the continuous development and deployment of various new technologies has helped arm emergency responders with the solutions necessary to most effectively communicate with one another. And while local and regional success stories are common, the framework for the deployment of a nationwide, wireless broadband network for public safety interoperable communications has kept the nation's first responders dreaming of what could be. That goal may have the possibility of becoming a reality in the upcoming weeks.

Introduced by Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), the Public Safety
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Spectrum and Wireless Innovation Act (S.911) promises to provide public safety with an additional 10 megahertz of spectrum known as the “D-Block” to support a national, interoperable wireless broadband network for the nation’s first responders at no cost to those entities.

A significant milestone has already been achieved. By a June vote of 21-4, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation approved the S.911 SPECTRUM Act allowing it to move forward toward a vote in the full Senate.

In response to this promising vote, Senator Rockefeller said, “I am glad that we have cleared this bill out of the Committee, and I intend to have conversations with leadership immediately about timing for a vote by the full Senate. I strongly encourage my colleagues in the House to also move forward with this legislation so that we can sign it into law by September, the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.”

As of the date of this article, with Congress in the midst of a five-week summer recess, it remains unlikely that the bill will be voted on prior to September 11th. Still, there is ever-growing optimism and appreciation of what this Act will do for the country and for the various first responder organizations responsible for our collective safety.

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Getting a Head Start on Grantseeking in 2012: What You Need to Know to Prepare

BY CHRISTOPHER HAIGHT, GRANTS DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

September can be an important marker for a lot of yearly transitions - students from kindergarten to graduate school return to the classroom, Fall begins, Monday night Football returns. However, for public agencies and nonprofit organizations, it should also herald the start to a new season of grantseeking.

The Federal government is set to wrap up its tumultuous Fiscal Year 2011 (FY2011) come September 30th - meaning there is likely little in the way of new grant opportunities from 2011 funding. During this transitory period, grantseekers should take a prospective look at the funding landscape and what they will need to know and do in these crucial months of preparation.

Both novice and experienced grantseekers should take away some important lessons from FY2011 and embark on a more comprehensive perspective to planning for grants.

Surveying the Landscape

Firstly and perhaps most importantly, grantseekers should understand that no grant program can be considered

"safe" in the new age of austerity.

Through the multiple funding bills that kept the government functioning up until the final agreement in March, Congress eliminated grants such as Improving Literacy Through School Libraries and Enhancing Education Through Technology. Even security-related funding pots took a hit, as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security saw its first budgetary reductions since its inception a decade ago.

Grantseekers would be best advised to keep a realistic perspective: Eliminated programs are unlikely to be brought back to life and remaining programs will have to fight just to maintain level funding. Those likely to succeed are programs that have a strong backing from either the Obama administration or Congress.

For example, in the early debates over FY2012 spending bills, the House Committee bill eliminated the popular Assistance to Firefighters Grants (worth approximately \$400 million annually) - funding that has since been restored in draft versions of the bill as it progressed. Similarly, the Obama

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Grants Program Spotlight:

Museums for America

Museums for America (MFA) is the Institute's largest grant program for museums, supporting projects and ongoing activities that build museums' capacity to serve their communities. Museums for America grants strengthen a museum's ability to serve the public more effectively by supporting high-priority activities that advance the institution's mission and strategic goals. MFA grants are designed to be flexible: funds can be used for a wide variety of projects, including ongoing museum activities, research and other behind-the-scenes activities, planning, new programs, purchase of equipment or services, and activities that will support the efforts of museums to upgrade and integrate new technologies.

Eligible applicants are state or local governments or nonprofit organizations.

MFA grants range from \$5,000 to \$150,000. Project activities supported by these grants may be carried out for up to three years (with strong justification), but generally up to two years. A 1:1 cost share is required for MFA grants

The deadline is November 1, 2011.

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administration pushed hard to include funds for its prioritized programs in education like Race to the Top - even if that meant sacrificing other, less well-known programs.

It would be helpful to survey the grants landscape from 2011 to see what was funded and at what levels - this will provide a starting point to form a list of target opportunities. With Congress back in session and FY2012 funding bills at the top of the agenda, following the political developments will also be of utmost importance to determine what final shape 2012 spending will take.

Identifying Diverse Funding Sources

The second key consideration grantseekers should take in preparation for 2012 is the state of competition for funding. Frequently, public agencies and nonprofit organizations find themselves up against more applicants for smaller pots of money. There are several strategies grantseekers can deploy to adapt to this new reality.

One is a keystone piece of advice more typically associated with your retirement accounts than grants is to diversify. This can be done in multiple ways, such as looking to other agencies across the government. Institutions of higher education can supplement grant income by looking outside the Department of Education

and towards those offered by the Department of Labor. Nonprofit community organizations may be surprised to find they can find different grant opportunities across the Departments of Education, Commerce, and Housing and Urban Development, as well as from agencies like the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Another option would be to look for new, mutually beneficial partnerships in applying for grants. Partnering can help organizations within the same community apply for larger sums of grant funding than they may otherwise be able to qualify for as individual applicants. Meaningful collaborations can also make your applications more competitive relative to others by demonstrating that there is community-wide buy-in. Funders - both government and private - prefer to see there are multiple stakeholders who will want to ensure the project succeeds and sustains its positive impact well beyond the grant period.

Building Better Projects

Even with the challenges of limited budgets and increased competition, grantseekers should also use this time to build grant-eligible projects, especially when looking towards federal funding. Grants Office commonly receives requests for research on grant opportunities that are equipment-centric, which often

proves the least optimal approach for securing grant funding, as funders prefer to be a part of a larger initiative focused on end results and outcomes. With this in mind, grantseekers should start the process not with "What do we need?" in mind but rather, "What do we want to accomplish?"

A recent article in the *New York Times* (<http://tinyurl.com/3msdn15>) highlighted what many grant funders find problematic in equipment or technology-focused applications in the education field: even with the additional procurement of the latest technologies, student performance remained flat. While there are arguments for technology being ably used to improve academic achievement, the mere fact that a school hasn't been able to upgrade its computers in the past few years will hardly be a convincing sell to most funders. Technology and equipment should be viewed more as the means to an end, rather than the goal itself.

Grantseekers, whether in education or other sectors, should seek to build strategies and initiatives based on research or replicate proven successes in order to increase their odds of securing funding. Positioning a project with a strong academic or theoretical background makes even clearer to funders that all necessary due diligence has been performed and the money will be in good hands.

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Strategic Grantseeking

Putting these three key aspects of grantseeking together can help build a successful grantseeking strategy. First, evaluate the funding landscape - try to gauge what will likely to be available again and what, unfortunately, will not. With this in mind, next try to identify key opportunities across source of grants that you would like to target in the coming year. Finally, begin planning grant-eligible projects by embracing an outcomes-oriented perspective and referencing previous years' guidelines and funded applications to see what it takes to succeed.

Given these demands and complexity of building a well-researched project, it is also important to keep in mind the timeframe of many grant programs. A typical timeline will typically have a Request for Proposals (RFP) released four to six weeks ahead of the actual application deadline. Be advised - this can be a severe time crunch if crucial project details (including budget and management items) are not somewhat developed beforehand. In addition to developing the actual project details, putting it all in writing can be even more onerous, as federal grants can require over thirty pages just for the narrative. Getting started now gives you a head start on the competition.

Grantseeking is not as easy as it may seem at first glance. It is just as

much about strategizing and planning as it is finding and applying. Still, with a better understanding of and firm commitment to grantseeking as a long-term process, organizations can continue to succeed in winning critical grant dollars. A more challenging grants landscape does not necessarily need to mean an impossible one.

Grant Programs to Consider for 2012

We list below some of the top grant opportunities likely to be funded again in 2012:

Trade Adjustment Assistance

Community College and Career

Training Grants: These grants were first made available in 2011 with funding from the student loan reform law passed in conjunction with the healthcare reform law from 2010. This funding provides grants ranging in size from \$2.5 million to \$20 million to support development and expansion of two-year workforce development programs that target high-growth industries. Because the program was authorized and funded through its original legislation, it will be less susceptible to cuts or elimination through the annual appropriations process.

Assistance to Firefighters Grants:

These grants, available to fire departments and nonaffiliated EMS organizations, support equipment and vehicle acquisition. Although a target

in early stages of the appropriations process in 2011, Congress restored funding by the time the final Continuing Resolution passed. A similar trend seems to be setting up for 2012, with funding likely to be restored by the time Congress agrees on final numbers for the year. As one of the few sources of funding available specifically for firefighters, this grant program benefits from a persuasive constituency.

Justice Assistance Grants: Justice Assistance Grants, available through formula and competitive grant pathways, represent a large bulk of federal funding available for local law enforcement initiatives. Given this scope, it is unlikely the entire pot of funding would be eliminated, although it may be open to restructuring (for example, consolidating it into a competitive-only program).

School-Based Health Centers: Much like the Trade Adjustment Assistance Grants, this funding stream was authorized and funded by the health care reform law - meaning it does not require funding from the annual appropriations bills. This means that unless Congress acts to rescind the money provided, there should be another competition. Funding from these grants support capital and equipment requests from school-based health centers or their sponsoring organizations (schools, hospitals, etc.).



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*Grantwriting is a separate fee-based service; its cost is not included in the Get in the Game™ program price.



CPR for Grantwriters: Reviving Unfunded Applications

BY CHRISTOPHER HAIGHT, GRANTS DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

Grant funding, like any other competition, inevitably results in winners and losers - and unfortunately, the latter tend to outnumber the former. Take for instance, the Investing in Innovation program available from the U.S. Department of Education. This year's competition brought out over 500 applicants for just under \$150 million in total funding. It is likely fewer than 30 of these applications will receive funding - making it just as unlikely to receive grant funding as it is to get into Harvard.

The competitiveness of grant programs can vary greatly. Grants can be targeted specifically to certain organizations through formula grants, by which pre-determined recipients are allotted amounts through a specific quantitative measure (population numbers, demographics, security threat, etc.). A prime example of this kind of grant is the State Homeland Security Grant Program, through which each state is allotted a certain amount of money. Applications under these kinds of programs are more a formality

to ensure accountability and proper management of funds, rather than to competitively review worthiness of projects.

In contrast, programs like the Investing in Innovation program can attract far more applicants than it could ever reasonably fund. Hearing odds like the ones described previously may discourage some organizations from even submitting an application - especially ones that can be demanding in terms of proposal requirements. It is just as common to hear previously unfunded applicants give up on applying at all to the largest programs, for fear their efforts will be in vain.

However, before tearing up a previously rejected proposal, it is worth considering what you can do to revive a seemingly dead application:

C: Consider the Reviews

The first thing you should absolutely do is take time with your project team and grant writer(s) to review the application and how it was scored. Often times, especially for federal

programs, you can receive reviewer feedback and actually view comments on the application as a whole or its individual parts. The U.S. Department of Education provided this level of transparency possible on the largest scale, making publicly available individual reviewers' scores and comments from its \$4 billion Race to the Top program funded under the Recovery Act.

While critical feedback is never particularly pleasant, it can be valuable and informative for reapplying next year. When considering the reviews, take into account the following aspects:

- *Where did you lose the most points on the application?* This is likely the most intuitive thing to do, as it will tell you what parts contributed most to your losing out on funding.
- *Can you gain points through your own efforts, or are they outside your immediate control?* For some parts of the application, it may be you did not include enough detail,

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did not explain something well enough, or failed to include supportive data or evidence. These situations are usually an easy fix for future applications. However, you lose points for characteristics outside your control (for example, some applicants that serve a high number of impoverished individuals receive priority consideration), there is little you can do to alter your application and it may be better to focus efforts elsewhere. You may be able to refashion your projects to address priority populations, so long as you do not misrepresent the actual project details.

- *Are the scores consistent across reviewers?* Reviewers, no matter how educated, trained, and well-intentioned are, alas, human. There will be times when one reviewer may give you a high score and another awards the polar opposite. For these sections of the application where large scoring discrepancies exist, the best you can do is consider the low scorer's feedback and make marginal improvements. Above all, make sure you hew as closely as possible to what questions the application asks of you. Keeping this laser-like focus will help ensure consistency and conformity

with the official guidelines and diminish the risk of scorer discrepancy. Beware, however, that it does happen across many competitive grant programs.

P: Pursue Other Funding

Next, remember a written application is never a complete waste of time - even if it goes unfunded by program to which you first apply. You've already done a lot of the leg work. In fact, your application may be superb but competition was just too close (remember, the state of New Jersey's loss of a \$400 million Race to the Top grant was largely attributed to a clerical error, not necessarily a problem with the project narrative or budget). In these instances, you should look to other grant programs and sources for which you can re-purpose your proposal. These alternative funding options could include looking to other grants offered by the same agency, other government sources, or community foundations. Recycling a project proposal allows you to maximize the potential payoff of the time and energy already expended on the original draft.

Remember, it usually isn't wise to just copy and paste entire proposals. Each grant program usually has specific demands of applications. You should always tailor each grant application to the specific funder and program. However, basic project descriptions and details can be fairly uniform so long as you are still seeking

funding for the same initiative.

R: Rewrite!

Finally, be honest with yourself. If parts or the entire application needs it, rewrite and submit next year. A host of reasons can contribute to poor writing - it was your first time, you were unaccustomed to grant proposals of a certain size, the development period was hurried, etc. Rewriting should never occur in a vacuum, though. It is critical to bring in outsiders who can bring a new perspectives, such as grant consultants, project managers, writers, etc. These external perspectives will give a fresh set of your eyes to your project and application - and very often be able to point you in better directions for grants to pursue or how to write an application.

A valuable resource, in addition to review comments, can also be to look towards the applications that were funded. Some funders will make these publicly available. You may be able to use a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to access applications submitted to government programs or, consult with other grantseeking agencies that have proven successful.

There is, of course, nothing immediately positive about a rejection notice - but taking proactive steps to capitalize on the work and time you have already invested can direct you towards renewed opportunities for funding. Remember, you have to be in it to win it.



Back to the Future: mHealth is the 21st Century House Call

BY CHRIS LAPAGE, GRANTS DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

With Healthcare, one thing you can count on for certain is that it typically trails other industries by at least a decade in terms of the latest trends. While other sectors started moving away from file cabinets and towards electronic records in the early 1990s, the health industry is just starting to see significant uptake of electronic health records. However, it seems that many healthcare organizations are intent on following the latest trends towards utilization of mobile electronic devices, or mHealth. Indeed, many health care organizations are utilizing custom mobile applications to turn smart phones and other devices into personal health assistants. Mobile devices are being used to remind patients on strict prescription regimens to take their medication at the appropriate time of day. Two-way videoconferencing available on smart phones allows patients to conveniently consult with physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other health professionals. In other words, mHealth is the modern-day equivalent of physician house calls that were standard in the early days of western medicine. In a sense, it can be considered a return to patient-

centered care, where treatment and related follow-up are organized in a way that is most convenient for the patient. In fact, mHealth devices improve upon the historical house call as high speed data transmission allow health care to be requested and delivered very rapidly.

While there are a plethora of potential projects to be explored in the mHealth arena, uncertain reimbursement and payment models will likely temper growth in the area. Providers will be slow to engage patients through mobile devices until the legal and business impediments are addressed. Public programs like Medicare and Medicaid account for the bulk of spending on health care delivery.



As we saw with telehealth, laws will need to be passed to address licensure concerns (health professional licensure occurs at state level unlike mHealth which recognizes

no such boundaries) and update payment models to reimburse care provided over mobile devices. In addition, providers will need to address mHealth reimbursement models with private payers through contract negotiations.

While we wait for the legal issues and business models to be worked out, the federal government is beginning to demonstrate they recognize the value in mHealth initiatives. The National Institute of Health (NIH) recently announced three grant programs to fund mHealth projects, "mHealth Tools to Promote Effective Patient-Provider Communication, Adherence to Treatment and Self Management of Chronic Diseases In Underserved Populations." While all three program have the same title, they each use a different NIH grant mechanism to distribute funding. The R01 program indicates that it is a true research grant, with the NIH looking to fund projects resulting in the development, testing and comparative effective analysis of interventions that incorporates mHealth Tools to encourage patient-provider communications, promote treatment

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adherence and improve self management of chronic diseases. Similar to other NIH funding, applications are submitted by an individual (principal investigator) on behalf of an organization. Since they anticipate both large and small projects, there is no ceiling or floor on funding requests under the R01 program. The R03 mechanism is utilized for small, self-contained research projects in the mHealth arena with a limit of \$100,000 over a two-year project period. The R21

mechanisms supports exploratory and developmental mHealth projects, with an award ceiling of \$275,000 over a two-year project period. All three NIH opportunities are authorized through 2014, with multiple deadlines to apply each year.

While the mHealth-specific NIH opportunities represent a strong signal that the government recognizes the value of mHealth, these projects can also be funded through traditional grant funding available on an annual basis. mHealth initiatives are fundable through opportunities available each

year to improve health care delivery in rural areas, promote chronic disease management in outpatient and home-based settings, and utilize technology to improve care. Thus, health care providers that see the value of mHealth and want to explore applications need not wait for the removal of legal impediments or development of new business models. Instead, they can begin work immediately on various grant applications to fund their mHealth project.

Find Grant Funding for Your mHealth Project

Below are some of the top grant opportunities to fund mHealth projects:

mHealth Tools to Promote Effective Patient-Provider Communication, Adherence to Treatment and Self Management of Chronic Diseases In Underserved Populations (R01)

- **Award Information:** No ceiling or floor
- **Due Dates:** February 5, June 5 and October 5 through 2014
- **More Information:** <http://www.healthitgrants.info/GrantDetails.aspx?Grant=32410>

mHealth Tools to Promote Effective Patient-Provider Communication, Adherence to Treatment and Self Management of Chronic Diseases In Underserved Populations (R03)

- **Award Information:** \$100,000 over 2 years
- **Due Dates:** February 16, June 16, and October 16 through 2014
- **More information:** <http://www.healthitgrants.info/GrantDetails.aspx?Grant=32412>

mHealth Tools to Promote Effective Patient-Provider Communication, Adherence to Treatment and Self Management of Chronic Diseases In Underserved Populations (R21)

- **Award Information:** \$275,000 over 2 years
- **Due Dates:** February 16, June 16, and October 16 through 2014
- **More information:** <http://www.healthitgrants.info/GrantDetails.aspx?Grant=32411>

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October 2011 Webcasts

- **October 11, 2011:** COPS Secure Our Schools Grants

November 2011 Webcasts

- **November 8, 2011:** IT Grants Forecast in the FY2012 Budget
- **November 16, 2011:** 2012 Higher Education Funding, *Sponsored by Dell*
- **November 29, 2011:** Funding Fire Prevention and Safety Initiatives

December 2011 Webcasts

- **December 6, 2011:** It's a Small World, After All: Improving Foreign Language Instruction with Grants
- **December 13, 2011:** Grantwriting Series: Grants for Research and Development
- **December 19, 2011:** DHS Program Overview - Understanding Homeland Security Funding

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