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National Preparedness Grants - Strategies for Investment Reductions

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Security is generally viewed as a cost to be minimized, when possible, and as much as possible. Americans want security, but are willing to pay only so much for the service – and certainly do not want it to intrude on their freedoms.

After the 9/11 passenger-aircraft attacks against the Pentagon and the World Trade Center Towers in 2001, followed in short order by several anthrax-laden letter attacks, there was an accelerated increase in funding for national preparedness, with allocations escalating rapidly from less than $100 million in 1998 to over $3 billion in 2003. Meanwhile, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provided additional increases in the funding provided for bioterrorism grants for state and local governments, and hospitals; the HHS grants have averaged about $1.2 billion annually over the past decade.

These investment resources were destined from the start first to level out and then to gradually decline as the nation felt more secure and the destruction wrought by the 9/11 attacks became a less urgent memory (notwithstanding the 2005 Katrina flooding in Louisiana that briefly extended the focus on preparedness and resource investments). Those states and local jurisdictions that organized their efforts after 9/11 with the idea that the grants could be welcome seed investments to create capabilities for the long haul will probably be less seriously affected, therefore, as the grants begin to decline.

Four prudent strategies expected to be helpful in meeting the investment reductions anticipated already have been used, with varying degrees of success, by some states and regions: collaboration efforts; building on existing resources and structures; engineering resilience; and measuring preparedness. By adopting these strategies, other jurisdictions may be able to maintain most if not quite all of the gains that already have been achieved. Following are a few relevant comments about each of the four strategies.

Collaboration Efforts: A Focus on Mutual-Aid Agreements

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency embraced a scalable concept, built on the principle of mutual aid, that should help keep a redundancy of resources to slightly above the bare minimum. Collaboration and cooperation serve as a firm foundation for the NIMS strategy and have been a national priority for almost a decade. In a resource-constrained environment, collaboration is obviously helpful, and frequently mandatory.

It is not yet certain, though, what the floor will be for various grants programs as the funding levels continue to decline, but it seems probable that at least a minimum level of funding will continue to be set aside for investments in high-risk urban areas. A recent UASI (Urban Areas Security Initiative) conference in San Francisco, in fact, focused considerable attention on the collaboration theme as the probable key to future success.

Building on Existing Resources and Structures: Police & FBI Tie-Ins

States and regions can create many of the capabilities required for an all-hazards system by focusing closer and continuing attention on intergovernmental structures and governance policies carried out in partnership with the private sector. High-priority structures such as fusion centers and the integrated capabilities they foster – critical-infrastructure analysis, for example – could be built through the use of existing resources.

States that have already built fusion centers – usually in collaboration with Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) field offices, DHS analysts, and DHS's Protective Security Advisors for Critical Infrastructure – will certainly be more cost-effective in the long run. Fusion centers that have adopted intelligence-led policing policies will also be more cost-effective. Some law-enforcement leaders have suggested, in fact, that crime-prevention capabilities be redesigned to integrate terrorism into routine police processes. One of DHS's training partners – the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) in Oklahoma City, to cite

one successful example – trains police officers to collect information that should be valuable in intelligence-led policing. This "train the trainer" program has been widely praised by police chiefs in other cities that have adopted it.

Engineering Resilience: Effective Planning + Plus Hard Work = Success
Security should be designed into the current infrastructure environment to provide lower-cost security options. Achieving this goal can be facilitated by a regional resilience process – described in the *Regional Disaster Resilience Guide* and already available on The Infrastructure Security Partnership (TISP) website. The design and construction industry in each region should be engaged as a key element of the planning process, which can be and almost always is very hard work – but with a high payback in return.

Measuring Preparedness – The Key to Great Expectations?
Perhaps the greatest continuing challenge in the grants-making field is the measurement of capability development. There has been resistance in some quarters to "measuring capabilities" – a sometimes tenuous goal – and that resistance has made it more difficult to justify appropriations. The use of operational planning to determine gap analysis is usually a reliable guide for justifying investments, however. Moreover, the DHS's Regional Catastrophic Grant Program investments in urban areas have dramatically improved the possibilities for, and successes resulting from, collaborative planning. Nonetheless, it is not yet fully clear if those investments have answered all of the "measurement questions" that have been raised.

Sometime in the near future, though, the multi-agency collaboration used in the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) could provide the viable measurement framework needed to assess the NIMS components-preparedness, communications, and resource-management issues by using a streamlined version of target capabilities as the benchmark criteria. If nothing else, the U.S. public *expects*, reasonably enough, that the billions of taxpayer dollars already invested have been used wisely – but only the best and most cost-effective strategies and practices are likely to be well funded in future DHS budget requests.

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For additional information on The Infrastructure Security Partnership (TISP), visit http://www.tisp.org