



Federal Government Grants for Broadband

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In 1998, President Clinton signed Presidential Decision Directive 63, (PDD-63), which initiated a national effort to assure the physical, personnel and informational security of the United States' critical infrastructures including telecommunications, banking and finance, energy, transportation, and essential government services.

A major component of PDD-63 was for each of the respective departments and agencies to develop and implement a plan to protect its own critical infrastructures.

While each governmental entity was permitted to devise its own strategies for their respective plans, most plan include a vulnerability analysis which determines one's weaknesses, critical elements of operation are identified, and a priority is assigned to each critical element to solve vulnerabilities. PDD-63 and the critical infrastructure concepts were given renewed attention after the tragic events of September 11th, namely the formation of the Department of Homeland Security.

The connection between the two comes in the form of the Department of Homeland Security's mission, namely the protection of the nation's critical infrastructures.

"Why should you care?" The short answer is free money.

Federal departments and agencies were charged with better protecting their critical infrastructures via PDD-63. As these same critical infrastructure-sare primarily, if not completely owned by private industry (e.g., private companies provide most, if not all, of our electricity), the public government counterpart (e.g., department of energy) would be required to assist, cooper-



ate, coordinate and share resources (\$\$) and information if success and protection of Homeland Security was and continues to be a serious consideration.

An entity seeking to invest in telecommunications upgrades, such as broadband services, traditionally analyzes the level of need and demand for such services in their respective service areas. The formation of the Department of Homeland Security and the grant programs associated with it, cre-

ate a new wrinkle for a telecommunications provider to consider.

The Department of Homeland Security's FY 2003 budget is \$6.71 billion, a large amount of which is to be allocated in the form of grants to State, cities and even counties throughout the United States to implement the Department of Homeland Security's mission. The reason for this is that many see States and the local municipalities as the first line of defense.



Example being, in the times of a crisis or tragedy, (e.g., September 11th) it is the State and local emergency services that are first to respond and provide assistance. Only with adequate training and sufficient resources are these same emergency service providers able to minimize loss of life and property.

An example of the allocations New Jersey being allocated \$37.6 million, Florida allocated \$5.2 million, and Arizona allocated \$28 million to enhance

emergency service capabilities including interoperable and secure communications. On a county level, the numbers continue to be impressive, Jackson County in Mississippi received \$100,000 to purchase communications equipment, Pima County and Maricopa County in Arizona received \$3.2 million and \$2.9 million respectively for communications upgrades and other homeland security efforts. On a national level, \$25 million was allocat-

ed to the Federal Emergency Management Agency to purchase interoperable communications equipment, \$5 million allocated to the National Institute of Standards and Technology to, in part, develop a secure test bed for wireless applications.

In order to be eligible for such grants, an entity will need to prepare and submit the necessary documentation required by the allocating governmental entity which will likely include specifics as to how the money will be spent, qualifications of the entity and ownership information. Women-owned and minority-owned businesses are given preferential treatment in the review process due to federal government standards, but other entities can take affirmative steps to enhance their chances of being selected by looking to past governmental efforts of this kind.

Past governmental efforts that have focused on some of the same critical needs as are present today have required such things as communication redundancy, infrastructure vulnerability analysis and some level of outreach with other critical infrastructures (e.g., energy and transportation). Entities stand to benefit by investing in telecommunication technologies that incorporate the afore mentioned. These additional requirements that an entity builds into its system will not only level the playing field for a new provider by making them a more attractive provider to governmental entities seeking communications assistance, but also potentially reward you with some free money. ■

About the Author

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