

SAFECOM Guidance on Emergency Communications Grants

Since 2007, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has worked with SAFECOM members and federal partners to develop the annual *SAFECOM Guidance on Emergency Communications Grants* (*SAFECOM Guidance*) for entities applying for federal financial assistance of emergency communications projects. It provides guidance to state, local, tribal, and territorial government grant recipients on:

- Recommendations for planning, coordinating, and implementing projects
- Emergency communications activities that can be funded through federal grants
- Best practices, policies, and technical standards that help to improve interoperability
- Resources to help recipients comply with technical standards and common grant requirements

SAFECOM's public safety practitioners and the National Council of Statewide Interoperability Coordinators develop *SAFECOM Guidance* and other resources to benefit the community, including a list detailing federal financial assistance opportunities, a funding mechanisms guide for public safety communications systems, system lifecycle planning guidance, and informational brochures such as sustaining land mobile radio and implementing Project 25 standards. The latest release of the *SAFECOM Guidance* and other funding resources are located on the SAFECOM website at cisa.gov/safecom/funding.

Applicable to All Federal Programs Funding Emergency Communications

SAFECOM Guidance provides information on eligible activities, technical standards, and other terms and conditions that are common to most federal emergency communications grants. Grants are administered by numerous federal agencies and are subject to various statutory and programmatic requirements. Thus, grant recipients should review individual grant guidance carefully to ensure their proposed activities are eligible, and that all standards, terms, and conditions required by the program are met.

With the caveat to follow program requirements when applying for federal funding, *SAFECOM Guidance* is recognized as the primary guidance on emergency communications grants by the Administration, the Office of Management and Budget, and federal grant program offices. Best practices and technical standards located within the *SAFECOM Guidance* help ensure that federally-funded emergency communications investments are interoperable and support national policies. *SAFECOM Guidance* address all types of emergency communications, including land mobile radio, data exchange, alerts and warnings, and Internet Protocol-enabled technologies such as public safety broadband and Next Generation 911 systems.

Compliance Requirements for DHS Grants

In 2015, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) began requiring its grant recipients to adopt *SAFECOM Guidance* recommendations and comply with specific terms and conditions outlined in Appendix D, "Compliance Requirement for DHS Grants" of the document. While only DHS/Federal Emergency Management Agency grant recipients are required to comply with *SAFECOM Guidance*, all entities are highly encouraged to follow its recommendations when developing applications for emergency communications grants.

Emergency Communications Priorities

SAFECOM Guidance is designed to promote and align with the national goals established in the [National Emergency Communications Plan](#), as well as other applicable Presidential Policy Directives, federal statutes, and regulations. SAFECOM members identified investment priorities to promote a consistent approach to improving emergency communications nationwide. State, local, tribal, and territorial government grant recipients are encouraged to target funding toward the following priorities:

- ❖ **Priority 1: Governance and Leadership** encourages:
Formalizing statewide governance structures and expanding membership composition to include the whole emergency communications community (e.g., public health, transportation, utilities, nongovernmental organizations).
- ❖ **Priority 2: Planning and Procedures** encourages:
Regularly updating strategic plans, considering the system lifecycle, and incorporating risk management strategies to protect against and mitigate disruptions to mission-critical communications.
- ❖ **Priority 3: Training, Exercises, and Evaluation** encourages:
Ensuring training and exercise programs to improve personnel's ability to use all available resources and promote information sharing for multi-agency responses.
- ❖ **Priority 4: Activities that Enhance Communications Coordination** encourages:
Implementing the National Incident Management System to enhance coordination, developing procedures to support new technologies, and strengthening resilience and continuity of communications.
- ❖ **Priority 5: Standards-Based Technology and Infrastructure** encourages:
Supporting public safety requirements that drive research, development, testing, and evaluation of communications technologies and ensuring systems meet mission-critical needs and data interoperability.
- ❖ **Priority 6: Cybersecurity** encourages:
Developing and maintaining cybersecurity risk management and identifying and mitigating equipment and protocol vulnerabilities to enhance agencies' cybersecurity posture.

Before applying for federal funding, *SAFECOM Guidance* recommends grant recipients review national and state plans, and coordinate with their statewide emergency communications leaders to ensure that proposals support current strategies. *SAFECOM Guidance* also provides information on changes in the emergency communications landscape and on federal grant requirements and restrictions to assist grant recipients in developing projects that are more likely to be awarded.

About SAFECOM

SAFECOM was formed in 2001 after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as part of the Presidential E-Government Initiative to improve public safety interoperability, allowing emergency responders to communicate effectively before, during, and after emergencies and disasters. SAFECOM is managed by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). Through collaboration with CISA, emergency responders, and elected officials across all levels of government, SAFECOM works to improve emergency response providers' inter-jurisdictional and interdisciplinary emergency communications interoperability across local, regional, tribal, state, territorial, international borders, and with Federal Government entities. For additional information regarding SAFECOM, visit cisa.gov/safecom.