

QUESTIONS RECEIVED REGARDING RFA ROUND 4 STATEWIDE INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATIONS GRANT

This document consists of questions timely received regarding this RFA. Questions have not been altered, except to provide clarity and anonymity to counties.

1. **Question:** We are looking for items to use in the Round 4 Grant application and we want to be sure they qualify. We are in the middle of building out a new LMR system. We did receive an award of 6 million in the Round 3 grant process but there are costs above what is being covered by that grant. Can a County ask for those additional items and costs that meet the list of guidelines? One example is our subscriber units. We are under contract for a minimum number but we will not be placing the order for several months, so would they qualify for this round of grants?

Answer: Standalone purchases of subscriber equipment are not permissible under this grant. Requirements of the Round 4 grant program disallow purchasing "Subscriber Equipment (mobiles, portables, desktop), when such equipment is not a part of the larger project compliant with components and objectives of the SICG; and/or when the major part of the grant application is to purchase subscriber equipment". One of the goals of Round 4 SICG is to develop resilient infrastructure across NY State, hence, allowing only subscriber equipment purchases will be contradictory to this goal. Future rounds of the grant program will be restructured to support, operate and maintain LMR systems in general.

2. **Question:** Would the purchase of VHF High Band pagers for all local Fire, EMS, Emergency Management and other response related county agencies be eligible in Round 4 SICG?

Answer: Purchase of VHF High Band pagers or any other standalone subscriber equipment is not permissible under this grant. Requirements of the Round 4 grant program disallow purchasing of "Subscriber Equipment (mobiles, portables, desktop), when such equipment is not a part of the larger project compliant with components and objectives of the SICG; and/or when the major part of the grant application is to purchase subscriber equipment". One of the goals of Round 4 SICG is to develop resilient infrastructure across NY State, hence, allowing only subscriber equipment purchases will be contradictory to this goal. Future rounds of the grant program will be restructured to support, operate and maintain LMR systems in general.

3. **Question:** On page 15 of the RFP for the Round 4 Statewide Interoperable Communications Grant program; under the Heading of "Costs not permissible" it is stated that Salaries and/or Overtime associated with existing or on-going operations are unallowable. Would salaries and/or Overtime-Backfill costs be allowable for newer projects that would be funded under this program such as an agencies member participation in an appropriate Exercise or Training course?

Answer: Salaries and/or Overtime costs related to the proposed project, including training and exercises, and other allowable costs are permissible expenses under Round 4 SICG program.

4. **Question:** I am inquiring about allowable purchases related to the upcoming Round 4 Statewide Interoperable Communications Grant (2014-2015). County has recently implemented a New Emergency Communications System which included new dispatch consoles. We have also implemented a new telephony system to allow for expanded interoperability with surrounding counties. With the above purchases taken into consideration, we are in need of upgrading our furniture to accommodate and house this equipment. Is dispatch furniture allowed as an acceptable purchase for this round of grant funding?

Answer: Dispatch furniture or any other furniture are not permissible expenses under the Round 4 SICG program. Please refer to other grant programs, such as PSAP Operations Grant where dispatch furniture would be considered as an operational expense.

5. **Question:** I have a question regarding the ability to “Consolidate and improve public safety dispatching operations and implement Next Generation 911 capabilities across New York State, including large investments into PSAP technology improvements and upgrades”. I understand that eligible expenses include Computer Aided Dispatch Software. I would like to confirm that eligible costs would also include the Mobile Data Terminal Software and Records Management System Software that would typically be part of PSAP technology improvements and upgrades.

Answer: As described and depending on overall submitted project, such expenses could be considered as a permissible expense. Overall application must comply with all RFA requirements and meet set goals.

6. **Question:** Section I, subsection 2, page 6, Program Goals: Item 3
As the County 911 Dispatch Center we dispatch and provide data access for several local Police, the NYS Police and all Fire and EMS within our county. Our County is in need of a CAD/RMS/Jail/Mobile software solution. Is this an eligible expense?

Answer: As described and depending on overall submitted project, such expenses could be considered as a permissible expense. Overall application must comply with all RFA requirements and meet the RFA goals.

7. **Question:** Section III, subsection “Programmatic Highlights and Priorities”, page 14, Bullet 8
Is this statement referring to building out of the 700 MHz broadband network? “Implement IP-based interoperability network layer to support ad hoc interoperability and dispatch needs and to extend interoperability beyond on scene participants.”

Answer: No, this statement does not refer to the 700MHz public safety broadband network. It refers to any IP network, (examples: microwave or wireline network) as a backbone for LMR, regional connectivity between systems, and/or method of carrying data between PSAPs.

8. **Question:** Section IV, subsection 1, page 15, Allowable expenses: Subscriber Equipment
Our County was previously awarded a SICG award for an upgraded countywide communications system. We now need to purchase subscriber equipment for other local government agencies and local fire departments to operate on the new system. Is that allowable in Round 4 as part of a previous award?

Answer: Standalone subscriber equipment is not permissible under this grant. Requirements of the Round 4 grant program disallow purchasing “Subscriber Equipment (mobiles, portables, desktop), when such equipment is not a part of the larger project compliant with components and objectives of the SICG; and/or when the major part of the grant application is to purchase subscriber equipment”. One of the goals of Round 4 SICG is to develop resilient infrastructure across NY State, hence, allowing only

subscriber equipment purchases will be contradictory to this goal. Future rounds of the grant program will be restructured to support, operate and maintain LMR systems in general.

9. **Question:** In the guidance it requires “AES” encryption. Does that mean the “AES 256” encryption?

Answer: Correct, it references AES 256-bit encryption, as P25 standards rely on such encryption to ensure the best level of protection and interoperability and as recommended by the US Government. For more information please reference RFA Instruction, Section 5, Standards and Guidelines.

10. **Question:** While reviewing the guidelines for this Round 4 funding, under NOT-Permissible Costs you have the following listed:

“Subscriber Equipment (mobiles, portables, desktop), when such equipment is not a part of the larger project compliant with components and objectives of the SICG; and/or when the major part of the grant application is to purchase subscriber equipment. “

So our question is, are portable radios an allowable cost when the P25 compliant system is dependent upon them for proper communication?

Answer: Standalone purchase of the subscriber equipment is not permissible under this grant. Requirements of the Round 4 grant program disallow purchasing “Subscriber Equipment (mobiles, portables, desktop), when such equipment is not a part of the larger project compliant with components and objectives of the SICG; and/or when the major part of the grant application is to purchase subscriber equipment”. One of the goals of Round 4 SICG is to develop resilient infrastructure across NY State, hence, allowing only subscriber equipment purchases will be contradictory to this goal. Future rounds of the grant program will be restructured to support, operate and maintain LMR systems in general.

11. **Question:** Page 12 of RFA says, “Applicants must submit both a (1) Local Assistance M/WBE Subcontractor/Supplier Utilization Proposal Form and (2) M/WBE Equal Employment Opportunity Staffing Plan after award announcement.” Are any M/WBE forms required at the time of application?

Answer: No, M/WBE forms are not required at the time of the application. However, they will be required after award announcements, during contract development stages. Please refer to Section II - Eligibility, on page 11 of the RFA document.

12. **Question:** Page 18, Bullet #2 Under Application Submission:

a) “Complete all fields of the application, including numbering of pages where required, especially when including additional sheets.” It appears the Application is submitted as a separate file from the Optional Attachments (aka Additional Sheets). Correct? Which would not change the numbering of pages.

b) Please confirm that the Application Cover Page should be extracted from the Round 4 Application and submitted as a separate file.

c) Should the Round 4 Application remain in the same format? Or should we remove sections such as “How To Apply”, “General Eligibility Criteria” and “Application Cover Page”?

Answer:

- a) Budget Information Sheets in the Application and Additional sheets in Attachment 2, which is continuation of the Budget Information Form, must be numbered separately in the provided spaces on the bottom of the sheet to assure continuity of submitted information.
- b) Correct, please follow instructions on page 5 of the Round 4 SICG RFA Application and submission instructions on page 18 of the instruction document Round 4 SICG RFA.
- c) Please do not remove any sections of the application. The Application File is locked for editing and allows only form-filling.

13. **Question:** Page 23 of the RFA, EMC Training Requirement – who must attend this (specific roles/titles/positions)? How many people? Where is the training given?

Answer: Detailed information about EMC Training is provided on DHSES website: <http://www.dhSES.ny.gov/oem/training/emct.cfm>.

14. **Question:** RFA Page 25, NIMSCAST Report – are county applicants required to submit this at application?

Answer: No, NIMSCAST report is not required at the time of the application. However, it might be requested after award announcements, during contract development stages.

15. **Question:** RFA Pages 23 – 25 & 29, Contractor vs. Grantee vs. Bidder – are these terms used interchangeably or is there a difference in their meaning?

Answer: It is used interchangeably. In addition, RFA contractual terms and conditions should be extended to County contractors, as applicable.

16. **Question:** RFA Pages 31, paragraph 2, Staffing Plan – Is this form required at application?

Answer: No. Staffing plan is not required at the time of the application. However, it will be requested after award announcements, during contract development stages.

17. **Question:** RFA Application, Section 2.1 Budget - What form should the “Attestation that salaries associated with existing or on-going operations are not included in this project” take? Signature of authorized individual required?

Answer: Affirmative statement in the Budget Narrative is sufficient to fulfill this requirement.

18. **Question:** RFA Application, page 15 of 35, Can you provide an example of the type of Qualitative ROI analysis that you are requesting

Answer: Qualitative ROI is the term used to describe the benefits which are tough to quantify, however they have a significant impact on operations, efficiency, safety, risk factors and many other attributes of public safety operations.

Example: County is building additional LMR tower to improve the coverage. In this case, one of many qualitative ROIs could be an improved safety of officers and ability to protect the public.

19. **Question:** Our County was successful in receiving an award under SICG Round 3. However, through the design refinement phase and FCC licensing process it has become apparent that the original amount awarded is not sufficient to cover the costs for the entire project. Is it acceptable to apply for additional funds in SICG Round 4 to cover the shortfall in SICG Round 3?

Answer: Yes, County can apply for next stages of the existing project, as long as it complies with Round 4 grant requirements and overall goals.

20. **Question:** The grant instructions state that broadband is not a permissible cost (Section IV. Authorized Program Expenditures. 2. Costs Not Permissible). The County would like to install and operate county owned fiber optic cable between the Secondary PSAP and another County for interoperability. Does the State consider this installation to be a permissible cost?

Answer: Yes, IP backbone, such as fiber or microwave network, for PSAP connectivity or LMR is eligible expense.

21. **Question:** The grant instructions state that subscriber equipment is not a permissible cost, "when such equipment is not a part of the larger project compliant with components and objectives of the SICG; and/or when the major part of the grant application is to purchase subscriber equipment" (Section IV. Authorized Program Expenditures. 2. Costs Not Permissible). Please define "major part of the grant application." More than 50%?

Answer: Standalone purchase of the subscriber equipment is not permissible under this grant. Requirements of the Round 4 grant program disallow purchasing "Subscriber Equipment (mobiles, portables, desktop), when such equipment is not a part of the larger project compliant with components and objectives of the SICG; and/or when the major part of the grant application is to purchase subscriber equipment". One of the goals of Round 4 SICG is to develop resilient infrastructure across NY State, hence, allowing only subscriber equipment purchases will be contradictory to this goal. The intent of submitted application must fulfill the RFA goals; we are looking at the application as a whole, rather than percentage of cost allocations. Future rounds of the grant program will be restructured to support, operate and maintain LMR systems in general.

22. **Question:** The grant instructions state that proprietary technologies are not a permissible cost. Does this mean that funds cannot be used to upgrade existing technologies? The County is considering an upgrade to its New World system, including CAD, mobile, and records management systems. Can the grant funds be used to pay for the upgrade for these items?

Answer: Yes, as long as the system complies with standards developed by NENA, complies with standards and guidelines listed in this grant, does not preclude overall interoperability between entities, and allow interoperable interfaces, as necessary. Proprietary technologies in Round 4 SICG RFA are absolutely not permitted for development of LMR systems. However PSAP open standards on the national level are not fully developed at this time.

23. **Question:** On pages 16 and 17 of an Application, How recent (how far back) should we list county funding?

Answer: For questions 2.5 (page 16) please list current (2015) and upcoming years, if you have a 5-year financial budget, it would be good, but any future time-line is acceptable.

Financial obligation listed in question 2.6 should be related to and in conjunction with your proposal. Objective (b) is a part of the Round 4 application. County might have

already committed certain budget amount in 2016 county budget or will commit to meet the objective (b) in the next 2 years. Since the contractual period for this grant is 2 years and the contractual period will start on January 2016, we request information for 2016, 2017 calendar years. *Please note, that amount necessary to meet the objective (b) can also be requested in Round 4 application.*

24. **Question:** On pg. 18 of the Application, Do you want ALL consortiums or just Interoperable Consortiums (ie. EMS, etc.)?

Answer: Please list only consortiums related to interoperable communications.

25. **Question:** On pg. 22 of the Application, Question 5.3, Should I include the agreements of being a consortium - or are you referring to OTHER SOPs, MOUs, (or both)? Do you want only Communications related MOUs or ALL

Answer: Please list all MOUs and SOPs relative to communications and PSAP/dispatching.

26. **Question:** On. pg. 24 of the Application - similar to above, do you want SOPS/MOUs with NYS relating to Communications only ? Or ALL ?

Answer: Please list all MOUs and SOPs relative to communications and PSAP/dispatching.

27. **Question:** In the RFA, page 10, 3rd bullet point states:

“Have established (or will establish within 120 days of the potential notice of award) single point of contact, Interoperability Coordinator, to oversee county’s interoperability efforts, coordinate interoperability and communication projects.”

Is there a further job description for a County Interoperability Coordinator and what documentation can it be found in? Can this point of contact be an appointed County Governance Board if already in place?

Answer: The RFA reference to County Interoperability Coordinator is intended as a role, not a specific job description. We look at the County Interoperability Coordinator as a primary point of contact that can discuss interoperable communications on behalf of the county as a whole.

28. **Question:** Can I use analog on the national interoperability channels or State mutual aid channels that are designated for analog use (e.g. VCALL10, 8CALL90, NYLAW1)?

Answer: National Interoperability Channels must be operated in the mode specified in the National Interoperable Field Operations Guide (NIFOG). State common channels will be operated in accordance with the guidelines published on the DHSES website <http://www.dhSES.ny.gov/oiec/plans-policies-guidelines/>. However, please note that equipment purchased under grant the must still meet the P25 Phase 1 / P25 Phase 2 requirements as detailed in the Round 4 instructions. To determine if P25 Phase 1 and Phase 2 requirement is applicable for your application, please refer to the document “*Round 4 P25 Phase 2 Requirements*” posted on our website <http://www.dhSES.ny.gov/oiec/grants/2014-2015-SICG-4.cfm> under “Documents” section.

29. **Question:** If I have an analog system today that I am expanding, do I have to implement P25 Phase 2 on the new sites or channels?

Answer: Please refer to the document “*Round 4 P25 Phase 2 Requirements*” posted on our website <http://www.dhSES.ny.gov/oiec/grants/2014-2015-SICG-4.cfm> under “Documents” section to make determination whether the P25 Phase 2 requirement is applicable for your application or not.

30. **Question:** I am told that P25 Phase 2 does not exist for conventional systems. Does this mean I have to purchase a trunked system?

Answer: Not necessarily, it depends on your project. Please refer to the document “*Round 4 P25 Phase 2 Requirements*” posted on our website <http://www.dhSES.ny.gov/oiec/grants/2014-2015-SICG-4.cfm> under “Documents” section to make determination whether the P25 Phase 2 requirement is applicable for your application or not.

31. **Question:** Must I purchase or use encryption?

Answer: No, encryption is not required to be purchased or used. However, if the county purchases any encryption hardware or software, it must be AES-256 encryption. This ensures compatibility with other public safety entities.

32. **Question:** When can I start making purchases? Can I sign a contract right after award announcement?

Answer: No, all purchases must be made during performance period of the grant, in addition, procurement contracts related to the project must be signed during performance period of the grant, which starts on January 1, 2016 and ends on December 31, 2017. Only purchases made during performance period of the grant will be reimbursed to counties.

33. **Question:** Question 4.1 regarding the Programmatic Highlights and Priorities- there is unlimited characters to answer this question, but there is no check box or mention of additional sheets to complete this question. Can one additional sheet be included in the final submission to complete this question?

Answer: The answer can be provided as a word document attachment, clearly marked as response to question 4.1.

34. **Question:** We have a question regarding section 1.3. Detailed Description of the Proposed Project. 4500 is the character limit for this section and our answer to this question is under the 4500 characters but it is unable to fit within the space provided. Should we include an additional attachment for the remainder of our answer?

Answer: The answer can be provided as a word document attachment, clearly marked as response to question 1.3.