

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Committee on
Government Reform, House of
Representatives

May 2004

HOMELAND SECURITY

Management of First Responder Grants in the National Capital Region Reflects the Need for Coordinated Planning and Performance Goals




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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-04-433](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the National Capital Region (NCR), comprising jurisdictions including the District of Columbia and surrounding jurisdictions in Maryland and Virginia, has been recognized as a significant potential target for terrorism. GAO was asked to report on (1) what federal funds have been allocated to NCR jurisdictions for emergency preparedness; (2) what challenges exist within NCR to organizing and implementing efficient and effective regional preparedness programs; (3) what gaps, if any, remain in the emergency preparedness of NCR; and (4) what has been the role of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in NCR to date.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of DHS (1) work with local NCR jurisdictions to develop a coordinated strategic plan to establish capacity enhancement goals and priorities; (2) monitor the plan's implementation; and (3) identify and address gaps in emergency preparedness and evaluate the effectiveness of expenditures by conducting assessments based on established standards and guidelines.

DHS and the ONCRC Senior Policy Group generally agreed with GAO's recommendations and noted that a new governance structure, adopted in February 2004, should accomplish essential coordination.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-433.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact William O. Jenkins, Jr., at (202) 512-8757 or jenkinswo@gao.gov.

HOMELAND SECURITY

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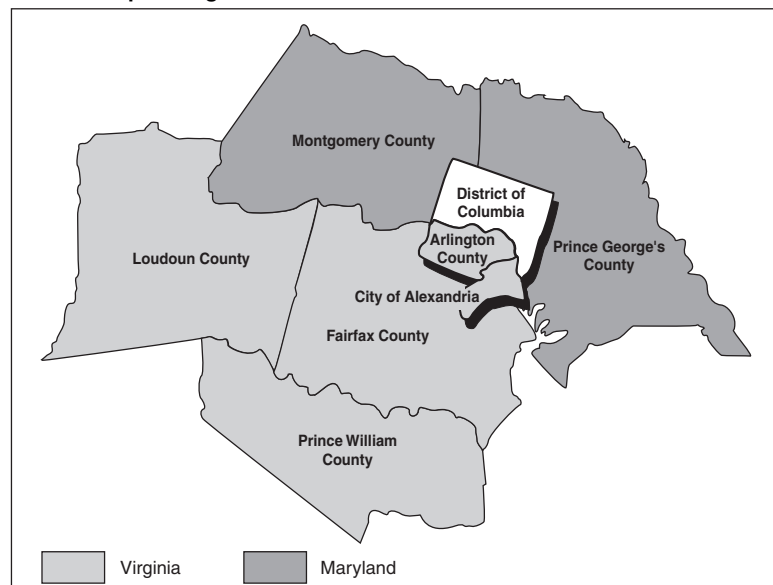
What GAO Found

In fiscal years 2002 and 2003, grant programs administered by the Departments of Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, and Justice awarded about \$340 million to eight NCR jurisdictions to enhance emergency preparedness. Of this total, the Office for National Capital Region Coordination (ONCRC) targeted all of the \$60.5 million Urban Area Security Initiative funds for projects designed to benefit NCR as a whole. However, there was no coordinated regionwide plan for spending the remaining funds (about \$279.5 million). Local jurisdictions determined the spending priorities for these funds and reported using them for emergency communications and personal protective equipment and other purchases.

NCR faces several challenges in organizing and implementing efficient and effective regional preparedness programs, including the lack of a coordinated strategic plan for enhancing NCR preparedness, performance standards, and a reliable, central source of data on funds available and the purposes for which they were spent.

Without these basic elements, it is difficult to assess first responder capacities, identify first responder funding priorities for NCR, and evaluate the effectiveness of the use of federal funds in enhancing first responder capacities and preparedness in a way that maximizes their effectiveness in improving homeland security.

National Capital Region Jurisdictions



Source: National Capital Planning Commission.

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Abbreviations

| | |
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| CapWIN | Capital Wireless Integrated Network |
| CERT | Citizens Emergency Response Training |
| CFDA | Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance |
| DHS | U.S. Department of Homeland Security |
| DOD | Department of Defense |
| EMPG | Emergency Management Performance Grant Program |
| FEMA | DHS's Federal Emergency Management Agency |
| HHS | U.S. Department of Health and Human Services |
| MEMA | Maryland Emergency Management Agency |
| NCR | National Capital Region |
| NVRC | Northern Virginia Regional Commission |
| ODP | DHS's Office for Domestic Preparedness |
| ONCRC | DHS's Office of National Capital Region Coordination |
| RECP | Regional Emergency Coordination Plan |
| RICCS | Regional Incident Communication and Coordination System |
| UASI | Urban Area Security Initiative |
| VDEM | Virginia Department of Emergency Management |
| WashCOG | Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments |
| WMD | Weapons of Mass Destruction |

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G A O

Accountability * Integrity * Reliability

United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

May 28, 2004

The Honorable Tom Davis
Chairman
Committee on Government Reform
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the Washington, D.C., area, known as the National Capital Region (NCR), has been recognized as a high-threat area for terrorism.¹ The complexity of the region, composed of jurisdictions including the nation's capital and surrounding areas in the states of Maryland and Virginia, and a range of potential targets, presents significant challenges to coordinating and developing effective homeland security programs. In recognition of the region's status as a significant potential target, a substantial amount of federal funding was provided to NCR in fiscal years 2002 and 2003 to enhance the region's ability to prepare for and respond to emergencies, including terrorist attacks. Federal funding has also been provided to other high-threat urban areas around the nation, and at your request, our work in NCR will be followed by a review of coordination practices in several other urban regions around the nation.

In 2003, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was established to consolidate the resources of 22 federal agencies for dealing in a multifaceted and comprehensive manner with domestic preparedness, including coordinating with other levels of government, planning programs, and assessing their effectiveness. These responsibilities include oversight of the grant-making process to promote effective domestic preparedness programs. Appropriations to DHS and agencies in the Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services for domestic preparedness programs for state and local governments totaled nearly

¹The Homeland Security Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-296, §882 (2002)) incorporates the following definition of the National Capital Region from 10 U.S.C. 2674 (f)(2). It is a geographic area that consists of the District of Columbia; Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland; Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties and the City of Alexandria in Virginia; and all cities and other units of government within the geographic areas of such district, counties, and city. We focused on the eight largest jurisdictions.

\$13.9 billion in fiscal years 2002 and 2003. These grants include funding to NCR, which received special focus with the creation of the Office for National Capital Region Coordination (ONCRC) in statute as part of the new department. ONCRC was established to oversee and coordinate federal programs for, and relationships with, state, local, and regional authorities. ONCRC's statutory responsibilities also include assessing needs, providing information and support, and facilitating access to federal domestic preparedness grants and related programs. To assist in accomplishing its mission, ONCRC developed a governance structure to receive input from state and local authorities through a Senior Policy Group composed of representatives designated by the Governors of Maryland and Virginia and the Mayor of the District of Columbia.

You asked us to examine preparedness efforts in NCR, with an emphasis on the use of funds, what has been done recently to better position the area to address potential threats, and what continuing problems exist in organizing and implementing efficient regional programs. This report addresses the following questions:

- What federal funds have been allocated to local jurisdictions in the NCR for emergency preparedness, for what specific purposes, and from what sources?
- What challenges exist within NCR to organizing and implementing efficient and effective regional preparedness programs?
- What gaps, if any, remain in the emergency preparedness of NCR?
- What has been DHS's role to date in enhancing the preparedness of NCR through such actions as coordinating the use of federal emergency preparedness grants, assessing preparedness, providing guidance, targeting funds to enhance preparedness, and monitoring the use of those funds?

To respond to the questions, we met with and obtained documentation on grant awards and spending plans from officials of DHS, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, ONCRC Senior Policy Group, state emergency management agencies, and first responder officials from NCR jurisdictions. We identified 25 emergency preparedness programs that provided funding to NCR, and we selected 16 of them for our detailed review. These 16 grants were selected to cover a range of programs including the largest funding sources; grants provided for general purposes, such as equipment and training; and grants provided for specific

purposes, such as fire prevention and bioterrorism. We collected and analyzed grant data from federal, state, and local sources. We also reviewed relevant reports, studies, and guidelines on homeland security and domestic preparedness. We conducted our review from June 2003 through February 2004 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. See appendix I for more details on our scope and methodology.

Results in Brief

In fiscal years 2002 and 2003, NCR received a total of about \$340 million from 16 grants administered by the Departments of Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, and Justice. These grants were awarded to state and local emergency management, law enforcement, fire departments, and other emergency response agencies in the National Capital Region to enhance their ability to prepare for and respond to emergencies, including terrorist incidents. Within NCR, two funding sources—the Fiscal Year 2002 Department of Defense Emergency Supplemental Appropriation (almost \$230 million) and the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) (\$60.5 million)—accounted for 85 percent of the homeland security grant funds awarded. These two sources were used for similar purposes. Funds from the Fiscal Year 2002 Department of Defense Emergency Supplemental went directly to local jurisdictions that had discretion to use it for their own priorities and needs. NCR jurisdictions reported they used these funds to purchase a range of equipment, supplies, training, and technical assistance services. The major expenditures reported were mostly for communications systems, including an interoperable radio system, and other types of equipment, such as equipment for emergency operations centers, bomb squad materials, bomb squad and command vehicles, and a mass casualty and disaster unit. ONCRC developed a plan for the use of funds from UASI, the purpose of which was to enhance security in large urban areas. The plan for these funds identified activities that would benefit the region as a whole, including equipment (\$26.5 million), planning (\$12.4 million), the costs of higher threat alert levels (\$10.6 million), training (\$5.2 million), exercises (\$4 million), and administrative costs (\$1.8 million).

ONCRC and NCR face at least three interrelated challenges in managing federal funds in a way that maximizes the increase in first responder capacities and preparedness while also minimizing inefficiency and unnecessary duplication of expenditures. First, and most fundamental, is the lack of preparedness standards that could be used to assess existing first responder capacities, identify gaps in those capacities, and measure progress in achieving specific performance goals. Such standards would

include functional standards for equipment, such as personal protection suits; performance standards, such as the number of persons per hour that could be decontaminated after a chemical attack; and perhaps best practice benchmarks. DHS administered the Office for Domestic Preparedness (ODP) Assessment to NCR jurisdictions in the summer of 2003. However, the lack of performance standards makes it difficult to use the results of the assessment to identify the most critical gaps in capacities. Since the NCR jurisdictions completed their ODP assessments, DHS has taken steps to address this challenge by adopting its first set of functional standards for protective equipment and making reference to establishing a system of national standards in its recently released strategic plan.

Second, there is no coordinated regionwide plan for establishing first responder performance goals, needs, and priorities and assessing the benefits of expenditures to enhance first responder capabilities. Prior to September 11, there were some efforts to develop regional emergency response planning and coordination, such as mutual aid agreements among neighboring jurisdictions. Since that time, the Washington Council of Governments (WashCOG) has developed one of the first regional emergency coordination plans and a communications notification system for NCR. However, no such NCR-wide coordination methods have been developed for guiding the spending of federal grant dollars and assessing their effects on enhancing first responder capacities and preparedness.

Individual jurisdictions and their emergency response agencies have determined how the majority (\$279.5 million) of the approximately \$340 million in federal grant funds will be spent. The one exception is the funding for UASI (\$60.5 million). ONCRC has focused its initial coordination efforts on developing a regional plan for the use of UASI funds for projects to benefit NCR as a whole.

Third, there is no readily available, reliable source of information on the amount of first responder federal grant funds available to each NCR jurisdiction, the budget plans and criteria used to determine spending priorities, and actual expenditures. While the NCR jurisdictions are required to submit separate reports on each grant to the administering federal agency, ONCRC has not obtained or consolidated this information to develop a comprehensive source of information for NCR on grants received, plans and priorities for spending those funds, and actual expenditures. Generally, spending decisions were made on a grant-by-grant basis and were largely in response to first responder and emergency management officials' requests for specific expenditures. Without

consistently available, reliable data, it is difficult to verify the results of ODP's assessment and establish a baseline that could then be used to develop plans to address outstanding needs.

During our review, we also could identify no reliable data on preparedness gaps in NCR, which of those gaps were most important, and the status of efforts to close those gaps. This is because the baseline data needed to assess those gaps had not been fully developed or made available on a NCR-wide basis, and ONCRC does not have information on how local jurisdictions have used federal grant monies to enhance their capacity and preparedness. Consequently, it is difficult for us or ONCRC to determine what gaps, if any, remain in the emergency response capacities and preparedness within NCR. Were these data available, the lack of standards against which to evaluate them would make it difficult to assess gaps. The ODP assessment did, however, collect information on regional security risks and needs for the NCR jurisdictions. ONCRC based spending decisions for UASI funds on the results of the assessment, with the funds used only for regional needs. On the other hand, officials in several NCR jurisdictions said that they have not received any feedback on the results of the assessment for their individual jurisdictions. It is not clear how the regional assessment and UASI spending plan links to the use of other grants for local jurisdictions and the gaps the jurisdictions' spending is designed to address.

To date, DHS and ONCRC appear to have had a limited role in assessing and analyzing first responder needs in NCR and developing a coordinated effort to address those needs through the use of federal grant funds. Without an NCR baseline on emergency preparedness, a plan for prioritizing expenditures and assessing their benefits, and reliable information on funds available and spent on first responder needs in NCR, it is difficult for ONCRC to fulfill its statutory responsibility to oversee and coordinate federal programs and domestic preparedness initiatives for state, local, and regional authorities in NCR. Some officials within NCR generally believed that additional DHS guidance also is needed on likely emergency scenarios for which to prepare and how to prepare for them. In meetings with us, the former Director of ONCRC acknowledged that the office could consider coordinating expenditures for federal grants other than the UASI grant. He also said that consistent records and a central source of information on NCR emergency responder grants would assist ONCRC in fulfilling its responsibilities.

Because of the importance of preparing NCR and other high-risk areas to meet considerable homeland security challenges, we are recommending

that the Secretary of DHS (1) work with NCR jurisdictions to develop a coordinated strategic plan to establish first responder enhancement goals and priorities that can be used to guide the use of federal emergency preparedness funds; (2) monitor the plan's implementation to ensure funds are used in a way that promotes effective expenditures that are not unnecessarily duplicative; and (3) identify and address gaps in emergency preparedness and evaluate the effectiveness of expenditures in meeting those needs by adapting standards and preparedness guidelines based on likely scenarios for NCR and conducting assessments based on them.

We provided a draft of this report to the Secretary of DHS and to NCR's Senior Policy Group for comment. DHS and the Senior Policy Group generally agreed with our recommendations, but also stated that NCR jurisdictions had worked cooperatively together to identify opportunities for synergies and lay a foundation for meeting the challenges noted in the report. DHS and the Senior Policy Group also agreed that there is a need to continue to improve preparedness by developing more specific and improved preparedness standards, clearer performance goals, and an improved method for tracking regional initiatives. DHS noted that a new governance structure, adopted in February 2004, should accomplish essential regionwide coordination.

Background

Since September 11, 2001, there has been broad acknowledgment by the federal government, state and local governments, and a range of independent research organizations of the need for a coordinated intergovernmental approach to allocating the nation's resources to address the threat of terrorism and improve our security. This coordinated approach includes developing national guidelines and standards and monitoring and assessing preparedness against those standards to effectively manage risk. The National Strategy for Homeland Security (National Strategy), released in 2002 following the proposal for DHS, emphasized a shared national responsibility for security involving close cooperation among all levels of government and acknowledged the complexity of developing a coordinated approach within our federal system of government and among a broad range of organizations and institutions involved in homeland security. The national strategy highlighted the challenge of developing complementary systems that avoid unintended duplication and increase collaboration and coordination so that public and private resources are better aligned for homeland security. The national strategy established a framework for this approach by identifying critical mission areas with intergovernmental initiatives in each area. For example, the strategy identified such initiatives as modifying federal grant requirements and consolidating funding sources to state and

local governments. The strategy further recognized the importance of assessing the capability of state and local governments, developing plans, and establishing standards and performance measures to achieve national preparedness goals.

Recent reports by independent research organizations have highlighted the same issues of the need for intergovernmental coordination, planning, and assessment. For example, the fifth annual report of the Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction² (the Gilmore Commission) also emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive, collaborative approach to improve the nation's preparedness. The report states that there is a need for a coordinated system for the development, delivery, and administration of programs that engage a broad range of stakeholders. The Gilmore Commission notes that preparedness for combating terrorism requires measurable demonstrated capacity by communities, states, and the private sector to respond to threats with well-planned, well-coordinated, and effective efforts by all participants. The Gilmore Commission recommends a comprehensive process for establishing training and exercise standards for responders that includes state and local response organizations on an ongoing basis. The National Academy of Public Administration's recent panel report³ also notes the importance of coordinated and integrated efforts at all levels of government and in the private sector to develop a national approach to homeland security. Regarding assessment, the report recommends establishing national standards in selected areas and developing impact and outcome measures for those standards.

The creation of DHS was an initial step toward reorganizing the federal government to respond to some of the intergovernmental challenges identified in the national strategy.⁴ The reorganization consolidated 22 agencies with responsibility for domestic preparedness functions to, among other things, enhance the ability of the nation's police, fire, and

²The Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction, *The Fifth Annual Report to the President and the Congress, Forging America's New Normalcy: Securing our Homeland, Protecting Our Liberty* (Arlington, VA.: Dec. 15, 2003).

³National Academy of Public Administration, *Advancing the Management of Homeland Security: Managing Intergovernmental Relations for Homeland Security* (Washington, D.C.: February 2004).

⁴Homeland Security Act of 2002 (P. L. 107-296 (2002)).

other first responders to respond to terrorism and other emergencies through grants. Many aspects of DHS's success depend on its maintaining and enhancing working relationships within the intergovernmental system as the department relies on state and local governments to accomplish its mission. The Homeland Security Act contains provisions intended to foster coordination among levels of government, such as the creation of the Office of State and Local Government Coordination and ONCRC.

The Homeland Security Act established ONCRC within DHS to oversee and coordinate federal programs for, and relationships with, state, local, and regional authorities in the National Capital Region.⁵ Pursuant to the act, ONCRC's responsibilities include

- coordinating the activities of DHS relating to NCR, including cooperating with the Office for State and Local Government Coordination;
- assessing and advocating for resources needed by state, local, and regional authorities in NCR to implement efforts to secure the homeland;
- providing state, local, and regional authorities in NCR with regular information, research, and technical support to assist the efforts of state, local, and regional authorities in NCR in securing the homeland;
- developing a process for receiving meaningful input from state, local, and regional authorities and the private sector in NCR to assist in the development of the federal government's homeland security plans and activities;
- coordinating with federal agencies in NCR on terrorism preparedness to ensure adequate planning, information sharing, training, and execution of the federal role in domestic preparedness activities;
- coordinating with federal, state, and regional agencies and the private sector in NCR on terrorism preparedness to ensure adequate planning, information sharing, training, and execution of domestic preparedness activities among these agencies and entities; and
- serving as a liaison between the federal government and state, local, and regional authorities, and private sector entities in NCR to facilitate access to federal grants and other programs.

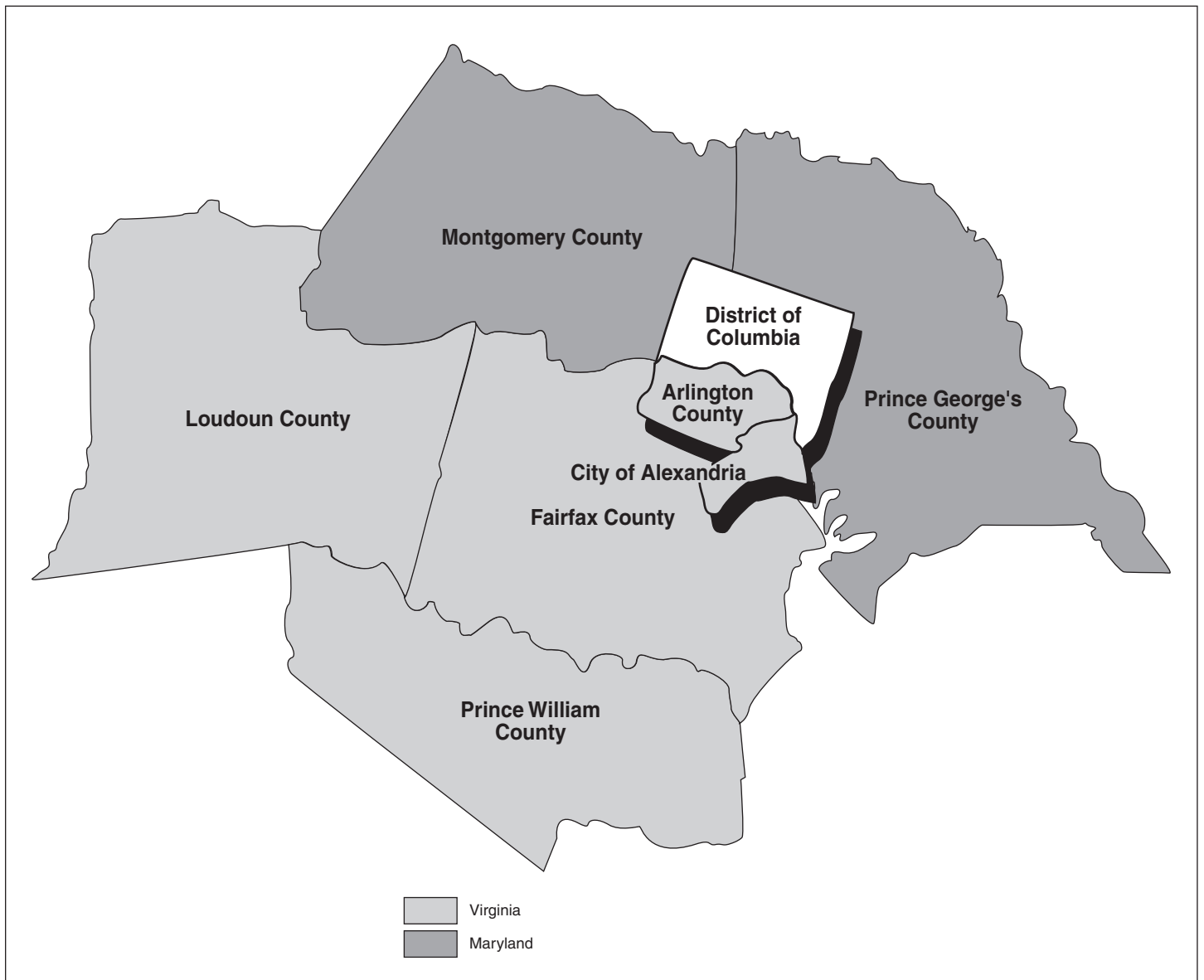
⁵P.L. 107-296 §882.

The act also requires ONCRC to submit an annual report to Congress that includes

- the identification of resources required to fully implement homeland security efforts in NCR,
- an assessment of the progress made by NCR in implementing homeland security efforts in NCR, and
- recommendations to Congress regarding the additional resources needed to fully implement homeland security efforts in NCR.

The first ONCRC Director served from March to November 2003, and the Secretary of DHS appointed a new Director on April 30, 2004. The ONCRC has a small staff including full-time and contract employees and staff on detail to the office.

Figure 1: National Capital Region Jurisdictions



Source: National Capital Planning Commission.

NCR is a complex multijurisdictional area comprising the District of Columbia and surrounding counties and cities in the states of Maryland and Virginia and is home to the federal government, many national landmarks, and military installations. Coordination within this region

presents the challenge of working with eight NCR jurisdictions that vary in size, political organization, and experience with managing emergencies. The largest municipality in the region is the District of Columbia, with a population of about 572,000. However, the region also includes large counties, such as Montgomery County, Maryland, with a total population of about 873,000, incorporating 19 municipalities, and Fairfax County, Virginia, the most populous jurisdiction (about 984,000), which is composed of nine districts. NCR also includes smaller jurisdictions, such as Loudoun County and the City of Alexandria, each with a population below 200,000. The region has significant experience with emergencies, including natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and blizzards, and terrorist incidents such as the attacks of September 11, and subsequent events, and the sniper incidents of the fall of 2002. For more details on the characteristics of the individual jurisdictions, see table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of National Capital Region Jurisdictions

| Locality | Jurisdictional structure/ characteristics | Population (2000 Census) | Budget |
|-----------------------------|---|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Maryland | | | |
| Montgomery County | County has 19 municipalities and an elected county executive and county council | 873,341 | \$3.1 billion (FY 2004 Adopted) |
| Prince George's County | County has 27 municipalities and an elected county council and county executive | 801,515 | \$1.8 billion (FY 2004 Adopted) |
| District of Columbia | | | |
| | City council, city administrator, and mayor | 572,059 | \$1.8 billion (FY 2004 Adopted) |
| Virginia | | | |
| Alexandria City | Elected mayor and city council and appointed city manager | 128,283 | \$479.2 million (FY 2004 Adopted) |
| Arlington County | Elected county board and appointed county manager | 189,453 | \$805.3 million (FY 2004 Adopted) |
| Fairfax County | County has 9 districts; an elected board of supervisors, and an appointed county executive | 984,366 | \$2.6 billion (FY 2004 Adopted) |
| Loudoun County | County has 8 districts containing 7 towns, an elected board of supervisors, and an appointed county administrator | 169,599 | \$799.2 million (FY 2004 Adopted) |
| Prince William County | County has 4 towns and 2 independent cities, an elected board of supervisors, and an appointed county executive | 280,813 | \$1.3 billion (FY 2004 Adopted) |

Source: Prepared by GAO from jurisdictions' data.

Multiple Grants Support a Wide Variety of Uses, Including Equipment, Training and Exercises, Planning, and Bioterrorism Preparedness

In fiscal years 2002 and 2003, Congress provided billions of dollars in grants to state and local governments to enhance the ability of the nation's first responders to prevent and respond to terrorism events. We reviewed 16 of the funding sources available for use by first responders and emergency managers that were targeted for improving preparedness for terrorism and other emergencies. In fiscal years 2002 and 2003, these grant programs, administered by DHS, Health and Human Services (HHS), and Justice awarded about \$340 million to the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and state and local emergency management, law enforcement, fire departments, and other emergency response agencies in NCR.⁶ Table 2 shows the individual grant awards to the jurisdictions. The funding sources we reviewed include a range of grants that can be used for broad purposes, such as ODP's State Homeland Security Grant Program and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Emergency Management Performance Grant, as well as more targeted grants for specific disciplines such as FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant and HHS's Bioterrorism Preparedness Grants.

⁶The \$340 million includes the \$60.5 million for UASI that is allocated to NCR for regionwide projects.

Table 2: Selected Emergency Preparedness Funding Sources to NCR Jurisdictions in Fiscal Years 2002 and 2003

Dollars in thousands

| Agency | Grant title with CFDA^a number | District of Columbia | Montgomery County | Prince George's County |
|-------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| DHS (FEMA) | Assistance to Firefighters (83.554) | \$221 | \$251 | \$147 |
| DHS (FEMA) | Citizen Corps (83.564) | 35 | 2 | 2 |
| DHS (FEMA) | Community Emergency Response Teams (83.565) | 148 | 14 | 9 |
| DHS (FEMA) | Emergency Management Performance Grant (83.552) | 2,195 | 305 | 159 |
| DHS (FEMA) | Emergency Operations Center Assessment (83.563) | 50 | 0 | 0 |
| DHS (FEMA) | Interoperable Communications Equipment Grant (83.566) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| DHS (FEMA) | State and Local All-Hazards Emergency Operations Planning Grant (83.562) | 198 | 0 | 0 |
| DHS (ODP) | State Domestic Preparedness Equipment Support Program (16.007) | 2,747 | 467 | 354 |
| DHS (ODP) | State and Local Domestic Preparedness Training Program (16.008) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| DHS (ODP) | State and Local Domestic Preparedness Exercise Support Program (16.009) | 0 | 44 | 0 |
| DHS (ODP) | State and Local Domestic Preparedness Technical Assistance (16.010) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| DHS (ODP) | State Homeland Security Grant Program Phases I and II (16.007) | 17,916 | 1,214 | 1,279 |
| DHS (ODP) | Urban Area Security Initiative Phases I and II (16.011) ^b | 60,491 | 0 | 0 |
| DHS (BJA ^c) | DOD Emergency Supplemental Appropriation (16.580) | 168,952 | 8,551 | 7,855 |
| HHS | Bioterrorism Hospital Preparedness (93.003) | 722 | 0 | 0 |
| HHS | Public Health Preparedness and Response for Bioterrorism (93.283) | 12,705 | 617 | 530 |
| Total | | \$266,380 | \$11,465 | \$10,335 |

| Alexandria City | Arlington County | Fairfax County | Loudoun County | Prince William County | Total by funding source |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| \$47 | 0 | \$170 | 0 | \$469 | \$1,305 |
| 0 | \$5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 49 |
| 14 | 35 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 240 |
| 10 | 53 | 0 | \$30 | 47 | 2,799 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 29 | 0 | 186 | 0 | 57 | 470 |
| 88 | 119 | 372 | 109 | 115 | 4,371 |
| 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 44 |
| 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 516 | 581 | 2,735 | 528 | 828 | 25,597 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 60,491 |
| 8,021 | 16,000 | 12,000 | 4,300 | 4,300 | 229,979 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 722 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13,852 |
| \$8,725 | \$16,793 | \$15,488 | \$4,967 | \$5,816 | \$339,969 |

Source: GAO analysis of NCR data.

^aCatalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance.

^bThe District of Columbia is the recipient of the UASI funds for projects to benefit NCR as a whole.

^cBureau of Justice Assistance.

While some of these grants are targeted to different recipients, many of them can be used to fund similar projects and purposes. For example, there are multiple grants that can be used to fund equipment, training, and exercises. We have previously reported the fragmented delivery of federal assistance can complicate coordination and integration of services and

planning at state and local levels.⁷ Multiple fragmented grant programs can create a confusing and administratively burdensome process for state and local officials seeking to use federal resources for homeland security needs. In addition, many of these grant programs have separate administrative requirements such as applications and different funding and reporting requirements.

In fiscal year 2004, in an effort to reduce the multiplicity of separate funding sources and to allow greater flexibility in the use of grants, several ODP State and Local Domestic Preparedness grants, which were targeted for separate purposes such as equipment, training, and exercises, were consolidated into a single funding source and renamed the State Homeland Security Grant Program.⁸ In addition, four FEMA grants (Citizen Corps, Community Emergency Response Teams, Emergency Operations Centers, and State and Local All-Hazards Emergency Operations Planning) now have a joint application process; the same program office at FEMA administers these grants. Overall, NCR jurisdictions used the 16 funding sources we reviewed to address a wide variety of emergency preparedness activities such as (1) purchasing equipment and supplies; (2) training first responders; (3) planning, conducting, and evaluating exercises; (4) planning and administration; and (5) providing technical assistance. Table 3 shows the eligible uses for each of the 16 grants.

⁷See U.S. General Accounting Office, *Federal Assistance: Grant System Continues to Be Highly Fragmented*, GAO-03-718T (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 29, 2003).

⁸The grants that were consolidated into the State Homeland Security Grant Program include the State and Local Domestic Preparedness Training Program, State and Local Domestic Preparedness Exercise Support Program, and State Domestic Preparedness Equipment Support Program.

Table 3: Uses of Selected Homeland Security Grant Programs

| Agency | Grant title with CFDA number | Grant objectives | Equipment and/or supplies | Training | Exercises | Planning and/or administration | Technical assistance |
|------------|--|--|---------------------------|----------|-----------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| DHS (FEMA) | Assistance to Firefighters Grant (83.554) | Grants made directly to fire departments to equip and train fire fighters and emergency medical technicians | • | • | • | • | |
| DHS (FEMA) | Citizen Corps (83.564) | Grants to supplement and assist state and local efforts to expand Citizen Corps | • | • | | • | |
| DHS (FEMA) | Community Emergency Response Teams (83.565) | Assist state and local efforts to start or expand community and emergency response teams | • | • | | • | |
| DHS (FEMA) | Emergency Management Performance Grant (83.552) | Grants to states to develop comprehensive emergency management plans | | • | • | • | |
| DHS (FEMA) | Emergency Operations Centers ^a (83.563) | Grants to states to develop emergency operations centers | | | | • | |
| DHS (FEMA) | Interoperable Communications Equipment (83.566) | Funding to jurisdictions for demonstration projects that explore uses of equipment and technologies to increase interoperability among fire, law enforcement, and emergency medical services | • | | | • | • |
| DHS (FEMA) | State and Local All-Hazards Emergency Operations Planning (83.562) | Grants to states to encourage the development of all-hazard emergency plans | | | | • | |
| DHS (ODP) | State Domestic Preparedness Equipment Support Program (16.007) | Grants to states to develop and implement a statewide domestic preparedness strategy | • | | • | • | |
| DHS (ODP) | State and Local Domestic Preparedness Training Program (16.008) | Grants to state and local governments to enhance capacity to respond to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) terrorism | | • | | | |

| Agency | Grant title with CFDA number | Grant objectives | Equipment and/or supplies | Training | Exercises | Planning and/or administration | Technical assistance |
|-----------|--|---|---------------------------|----------|-----------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| DHS (ODP) | State and Local Domestic Preparedness Exercise Support (16.009) | Grants to state and local governments to plan and conduct domestic preparedness exercises | | | • | • | • |
| DHS (ODP) | State and Local Domestic Preparedness Technical Assistance (16.010) | Grant to state and local governments to develop, plan, and implement a program for WMD | | | | • | • |
| DHS (ODP) | State Homeland Security Grant Program, Phases I and II (16.007) | Grants to states and local governments to purchase equipment and mitigate costs of enhanced security | • | • | • | • | • |
| DHS (ODP) | Urban Area Security Initiative, Phases I and II (16.011) | Designed to enhance the ability of first responders and public safety officials to secure urban area's critical infrastructure and respond to potential acts of terrorism | • | • | • | • | • |
| DOJ (BJA) | Fiscal Year 2002 Department of Defense Emergency Supplemental Appropriation (16.580) | Direct funding to NCR jurisdictions | • | • | • | • | • |
| HHS | Bioterrorism Hospital Preparedness (93.003) | Cooperative agreement ^a with health departments of all states, the District of Columbia, the 3 largest municipalities, and other entities | • | • | • | • | • |
| HHS | Public Health Preparedness and Response for Bioterrorism (93.283) | Cooperative agreement with health departments of all states, the District of Columbia, the 3 largest municipalities, and other entities | • | • | • | • | • |

Source: GAO analysis of CFDA and Congressional Research Service data.

^aA cooperative agreement is used as a mechanism to provide financial support when substantial interaction is expected between the executive agency and a state, local government, or other recipient carrying out the funded activity.

Two Largest Funding Sources Supported a Range of Efforts

Of the \$340 million awarded for the 16 funding sources, the two largest funding sources—which collectively provided about \$290.5 million (85 percent) in federal funding to NCR—were the Fiscal Year 2002 Department of Defense (DOD) Emergency Supplemental Appropriation⁹ and the Fiscal Year 2003 Urban Area Security Initiative. Both of these sources fund a range of purposes and activities such as equipment purchases, including communications systems; training and exercises; technical assistance; and planning.

The Fiscal Year 2002 DOD Emergency Supplemental Appropriation, which was provided in response to the attacks of September 11, 2001, provided approximately \$230 million to enhance emergency preparedness. Individual NCR jurisdictions independently decided how to use these dollars and used them to fund a wide array of purchases to support first responders and emergency management agencies. Our review of the budgets for this appropriation submitted by NCR jurisdictions showed that many of these grant funds were budgeted for communications equipment and other equipment and supplies. Table 4 provides examples of major projects funded by each jurisdiction with these funds.

⁹Department of Defense and Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Recovery From and Response To Terrorist Attacks On The United States Act, 2002, P.L. 107-117 (2002). This appropriation provided funds to NCR jurisdictions through Byrne Discretionary grants under the State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Programs within the Office of Justice Programs at the Department of Justice.

Table 4: Major Items Funded by NCR Jurisdictions from Fiscal Year 2002 DOD Emergency Supplemental Appropriation

Dollars in thousands

| NCR locality | Amount | Grant categories | Major uses of grant dollars |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---|--|
| District of Columbia | \$168,952 | Communications equipment, personnel/contracts | Wireless interoperability project (\$45,494) |
| | | Equipment and supplies, personnel/contracts | Increased security at facilities including public schools and the emergency management agency (\$25,536) |
| | | Equipment and supplies, contracts | Emergency traffic management, including upgrading traffic light controllers (\$14,000) and video traffic monitoring system (\$4,700) |
| | | Equipment and supplies, personnel/contracts | Chemical and biological weapons preparedness (\$10,355) |
| Maryland | | | |
| Montgomery County | 8,551 | Equipment and supplies | Command vehicle (\$350) |
| | | Equipment and supplies | Police command bus (\$310) |
| | | Equipment and supplies | Bomb squad vehicle (\$300) |
| | | Communications equipment | Special audio visual display (\$410) |
| | | Communications equipment | Communications console (\$202) |
| Prince George's County | 7,855 | Personnel | Unanticipated overtime costs and emergency response events. Other personnel costs include participation in disaster preparedness training and exercises (\$4,424) |
| | | Equipment and supplies | 9 ambulances (\$1,188) |
| | | Planning and administration | Fire/emergency medical services record management system to record, track, and analyze data collected based on specific parameters or requests by management to assist the Fire Chief in staffing levels, response times, and other resource allocation issues (\$525) |
| Virginia | | | |
| City of Alexandria | 8,021 | Communications equipment | Tactical computers (\$535) |
| | | Equipment and supplies | Aerial platform ladder truck (\$625) |
| | | | Radio communication digital equipment encryption capability (\$482) |
| Arlington County ^a | 16,000 | Communications equipment | Portable and mobile radios, command vehicles, upgrade records management system |
| Fairfax County | 12,000 | Communications | Radio expansion project (\$5,798) |
| | | Equipment and supplies | Emergency operations center upgrade (\$922) |
| | | | Mass casualty and disaster unit (\$500) |
| Loudoun County | 4,300 | Communications | Trailers (\$100) |
| | | Equipment and Supplies | Ladder truck (\$325) |

Dollars in thousands

| NCR locality | Amount | Grant categories | Major uses of grant dollars |
|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------------|--|
| | | | Bomb squad materials and supplies (\$125) |
| Prince William County | 4,300 | Communications equipment | Command bus replacement (\$580) |
| | | Equipment and supplies | Alternate command vehicles (\$200) |
| | | | Personal protection equipment and training (\$1,000) |
| Grand Total | \$229,979 | | |

Source: GAO analysis of budgets and expenditures provided by NCR jurisdictions.

Note: The Fiscal Year 2002 Department of Defense Emergency Supplemental Appropriation provided direct funding to NCR jurisdictions through the Byrne Discretionary grant under the State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Programs within the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs.

^aArlington, Virginia, did not provide supporting budget documentation for the specific expenditures from this appropriation.

UASI Targets Regionwide Preparedness Needs

In 2003, DHS announced a new source of funding targeted to large urban areas under UASI to enhance the ability of metropolitan areas to prepare for and respond to threats or incidents of terrorism. This initiative included a total of \$60.5 million to NCR,¹⁰ which was one of seven metropolitan areas included in the initial round of funding.¹¹ The cities were chosen by applying a formula based on a combination of factors, including population density, critical infrastructure, and threat/vulnerability assessment. UASI's strategy for NCR includes plans to fund 21 individual lines of effort for the region in the areas of planning, training, exercises, and equipment. In addition, funds are provided for administration and planning and to reimburse localities for changing levels of homeland security threat alerts. Table 5 summarizes the planned use of the UASI funds.

¹⁰Two appropriations provided funds used for the UASI initiatives. Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2003, P.L. 108-7 (2003); and Emergency Wartime Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2003, P.L. 108-11 (2003).

¹¹Other cities included Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Seattle. Subsequently, a second round of funding was announced to include 23 additional metropolitan areas and additional funding for the original seven regions, including NCR.

Table 5: Uses of NCR Urban Area Security Initiative Funds

| Project | Description | Cost |
|--|---|---------------------|
| Planning | | |
| Planning support | Contract with WashCOG to provide secretariat support to NCR planning efforts | |
| Communication protocol | Contract for the development of communications protocols, including business rules and training and testing programs | |
| Nonprofit coordination | Contract with Nonprofit Roundtable (with Red Cross buy-in) to coordinate nonprofit organization roles in emergencies including: who would be providing what; how support would be delivered; identify resource requirements, etc. | |
| Regional connectivity study | Contract for a study of a regional Emergency Operations Center (EOC), including location, staffing, connectivity, etc. | |
| Critical infrastructure protection oversight | Contract to manage and coordinate Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) activities in NCR to include completing an analysis of each Critical Infrastructure (CI) sector | |
| Private sector assessment | Support the development of an assessment tool that private sector within NCR can use to determine their vulnerabilities | |
| Preparedness for schools | Contract to provide materials to schools for education on preparedness | |
| Citizen education | Contract for a comprehensive and complete citizen education campaign for the region designed to reach all citizens and communicate emergency preparedness information | |
| Address special needs | Engage special needs populations to discuss and address preparedness, response, and recovery issues faced by citizens with special needs | |
| Other Planning Priorities | Support other Senior Policy Group (SPG) planning priorities | |
| Subtotal planning | | \$12,388,570 |
| Training | | |
| Public information officer/media training | Develop regular training program/dialogue for regional Public Information Officers (PIOs) and local media to help them protect themselves and communicate effectively during an emergency | |
| Local emergency responder training | Manage local emergency responder training program for NCR | |
| Subtotal training | | \$5,150,000 |
| Exercise | | |
| Full-scale exercise | Conduct a Topoff-2-like full-scale exercise in NCR with a series of three to four planning seminars leading up to an exercise that engages the entire region | |
| Regional exercises | Support regional exercises by jurisdiction and by discipline | |
| Subtotal exercises | | \$4,000,000 |
| Equipment | | |
| Responder equipment | Develop regional quartermaster capability to augment jurisdictional equipment | |
| Syndromic surveillance | Complete NCR node of "ESSENCE II" bio-surveillance program | |
| Public health and hospital capacity | Purchase equipment to support hospital surge capacity for NCR | |

| Project | Description | Cost |
|---|--|---------------------|
| Citizen notification and family reunification | Provide “Roam Secure/Reverse 911” service and weather radios as appropriate to ensure communication with NCR citizenry. Provide family reunification software to area shelters to assist in uniting families that are separated during incidents | |
| Communication hardware | Purchase required communication equipment (including radio cache) to establish an immediate interoperable communications capability (voice and data) for NCR | |
| Air tracking | Purchase equipment to track emergency response aircraft to deconflict their flights during periods of emergency | |
| Prevention | Support NCR prevention activities | |
| Subtotal equipment | | \$26,535,093 |
| Total | | \$48,073,663 |
| Grant administration | 3 percent to support the grants administration requirements | \$1,814,725 |
| Reimbursement | 25 percent set aside from UASI II to reimburse jurisdictions for costs associated with Homeland Security Advisory System changes. (Note: This only applies to the \$42 million of UASI II funds) | \$10,602,463 |
| Total | | \$60,490,851 |

Source: ONCRC data.

Challenges to Effective Grants Management Include Lack of Standards, Planning, and Data

Effectively managing first responder federal grant funds requires the ability to measure progress and provide accountability for the use of public funds. As with other major policy areas, demonstrating the results of homeland security efforts includes developing and implementing strategies, establishing baselines, developing and implementing performance goals and data quality standards, collecting reliable data, analyzing the data, assessing the results, and taking action based on the results. This strategic approach to homeland security includes identifying threats and managing risks, aligning resources to address them, and assessing progress in preparing for those threats and risks. Without a NCR baseline on emergency preparedness, a plan for prioritizing expenditures and assessing their benefits, and reliable information on funds available and spent on first responder needs in NCR, it is difficult for ONCRC to fulfill its statutory responsibility to oversee and coordinate federal programs and domestic preparedness initiatives for state, local, and regional authorities in NCR.

Regarding first responders, the purpose of these efforts is to be able to address three basic, but difficult, questions: “For what types of threats and emergencies should first responders be prepared?” “What is required—coordination, equipment, training, etc.—to be prepared for these threats and emergencies?” “How do first responders know that they have met their preparedness goals?”

NCR is an example of the difficulties of answering the second and third questions in particular. ONCRC and its jurisdictions face three interrelated challenges that limit their ability to jointly manage federal funds in a way that demonstrates increased first responder capacities and preparedness while minimizing inefficiency and unnecessary duplication of expenditures. First and most fundamental are the lack of preparedness standards and a baseline assessment of existing NCR-wide first responder capacities that is linked to those standards.

Performance Goals for First Responders Needed to Assess Spending Benefits

As in other areas of the nation generally, NCR does not have a set of accepted benchmarks (best practices) and performance goals that could be used to identify desired goals and determine whether first responders have the ability to respond to threats and emergencies with well-planned, well-coordinated, and effective efforts that involve police, fire, emergency medical, public health, and other personnel from multiple jurisdictions. The Gilmore Commission's most recent report noted that there is a continuing problem of a lack of clear guidance from the federal level about the definition and objectives of preparedness, a process to implement those objectives, and how states and localities will be evaluated in meeting those objectives. The report states the need for a coordinated system for the development, delivery, and administration of programs that engages a broad range of stakeholders.

Over the past few years, some state and local officials and independent research organizations have expressed an interest in some type of performance standards or goals that could be used as guidelines for measuring the quality and level of first responder preparedness, including key gaps. However, in discussing "standards" for first responders, it is useful to distinguish between three different types of measures that are often lumped together in the discussion of standards.

Functional standards generally set up to measure such things as functionality, quantity, weight, and extent and in the context of first responders generally apply to equipment. Examples include the number of gallons of water per minute that a fire truck can deliver or the ability of a biohazard suit to filter out specific pathogens, such as anthrax.

Benchmarks are products, services, or work processes that are generally recognized as representing best practices for the purposes of organizational improvement. An example might be joint training of fire and police for biohazard response—a means of achieving a specific performance goal for responding to biohazard threats and incidents.

Performance goals are measurable objectives against which actual achievement may be compared. An example might be the number of persons per hour who could be decontaminated after a chemical attack. Realistic training exercises could then be used to test the ability to meet that objective.

Homeland security standards should include both functional standards and performance goals. In February 2004, DHS adopted its first set of functional standards for protective equipment. The eight standards, previously developed by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), are intended to provide minimum requirements for equipment. These standards include NIOSH standards for three main categories of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) respiratory protection equipment and five NFPA standards for protective suits and clothing to be used in responding to chemical, biological, and radiological attacks.

Performance and readiness standards are more complicated and difficult to develop than functional standards. In a large, diverse nation, not all regions of the nation require exactly the same level of preparedness because, for example, not all areas of the nation face the same types and levels of risks and, thus, first responder challenges. For example, first responder performance goals and needs are likely to be different in New York City and Hudson, New York. Thus, different levels of performance goals may be needed for different types and levels of risk.

Recently, the administration has focused more attention on the development of homeland security standards, including the more difficult performance goals or standards. For example, DHS's recently issued strategic plan¹² makes reference to establishing, implementing, and evaluating capabilities through a system of national standards. Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8 (December 2003) requires the development of a national preparedness goal to include readiness metrics and a system for assessing the nation's overall preparedness by the fiscal year 2006 budget submission.

¹²U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Securing Our Homeland, Strategic Plan 2004* (Washington, D.C.: February 2004).

Coordinated NCR-wide Plan Needed to Guide First Responder Spending

The lack of benchmarks and performance goals may contribute to difficulties in meeting the second challenge in NCR—developing a coordinated regionwide plan for determining how to spend federal funds received and assess the benefit of that spending. A strategic plan for the use of homeland security funds—whether in NCR or elsewhere—should be based on established priorities, goals, and measures and align spending plans with those priorities and goals. At the time of our review, such a strategic plan had yet to be developed. Although ONCRC had developed a regional spending plan for the UASI grants, this plan was not part of a broader coordinated plan for spending federal grant funds and developing first responder capacity and preparedness in NCR. The former ONCRC Director said that ONCRC and the Senior Policy Group could have a greater role in overseeing the use of other homeland security funds in the future.

Consistent Data on Funding and Spending Needed to Establish Accountability

There is no established process or means for regularly and reliably collecting and reporting data on the amount of federal funds available to first responders in each of NCR's eight jurisdictions, the planned and actual use of those funds, and the criteria used to determine how the funds would be spent. Reliable data are needed to establish accountability, analyze gaps, and assess progress toward meeting established performance goals. Credible data should also be used to develop and revise plans and to set goals during the planning process. Were these data available, the lack of standards against which to evaluate the data would make it difficult to assess gaps.

It should be noted that the fragmented nature of the multiple federal grants available to first responders—some awarded to states, some to localities, some directly to first responder agencies—may make it more difficult to collect and maintain regionwide data on the grant funds received and the use of those funds in NCR. Our previous work suggests that this fragmentation in federal grants may reinforce state and local fragmentation and can also make it more difficult to coordinate and use those multiple sources of funds to achieve specific objectives.¹³

¹³See U.S. General Accounting Office, *Homeland Security: Reforming Federal Grants to Better Meet Outstanding Needs*, GAO-03-1146T (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 3, 2003).

DHS Efforts to Assess First Responder Needs Did Not Include Feedback to NCR Jurisdictions

NCR jurisdictions completed the Office for Domestic Preparedness State Homeland Security Assessment (ODP assessment) in the summer of 2003. At the time of our review, NCR jurisdictions said that they had not received any feedback from ODP or ONCRC on the review of those assessments. Preparedness expectations should be established based on likely threat and risk scenarios and an analysis of the gap between current and needed capabilities based on national guidelines. In keeping with the requirement of the Homeland Security Act that DHS conduct an assessment of threats and state and local response capabilities, risks, and needs with regard to terrorist incidents, DHS developed the ODP State Homeland Security Assessment and Strategy Program.¹⁴ The ODP assessment was aligned with the six critical mission areas in the National Strategy for Homeland Security,¹⁵ and generally followed the structure of a risk management approach. The assessment used the same scenarios for all jurisdictions nationwide, allowing ODP to compare different jurisdictions using the same set of facts and assumptions. Of course, the scenarios used may not be equally applicable to all jurisdictions nationwide.

The assessment collected data in three major areas: risk, capability, and needs related to terrorism prevention. The risk assessment portion includes threat and vulnerability assessments. The capability assessment includes discipline-specific tasks for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) events. The needs assessment portion covers five functional areas of planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercises. Supporting materials and worksheets on a threat profile, capability to respond to specific WMD, an equipment inventory, and training needs are provided to assist local jurisdictions in completing the assessment.

A feedback loop is a key part of a risk management process. It involves evaluating the assessment results to inform decision making and establish priorities; it is not clear how the results of the assessment were used to complete this process for NCR. ONCRC did not present any formal

¹⁴The State Homeland Security Assessment and Strategy Program is a refined version of the assessment that was established in fiscal year 1999 for the State and Local Domestic Preparedness Programs. The assessment was intended to allow state and local jurisdictions to update their earlier data to consider post-September 11, concerns, as well as to identify progress on the priorities outlined in their initial homeland security strategies.

¹⁵The six critical mission areas are Intelligence and Warning; Border and Transportation Security, Domestic Counterterrorism, Protecting Critical Infrastructure and Key Assets, Defending Against Catastrophic Threats, and Emergency Preparedness and Response.

analysis of the gap in capabilities identified by the assessment, and several NCR jurisdictions said they did not receive any feedback on the results of the assessment for their individual jurisdictions. The former ONCRC Director said that the results of the assessment for each of the NCR jurisdictions were combined to establish priorities and develop the strategy for the use of the UASI funds, but he did not provide any information on how the individual assessments were combined or the methodology used to analyze the assessment results. While the former Director said the results of the assessment were used to develop the plan for the use of the UASI funds within NCR, he said that they were not applied beyond that one funding source to establish priorities for the use of other federal grants.

Some Regional Planning Efforts Exist but Do Not Include Coordination for Funding

While the NCR jurisdictions had emergency coordination practices and procedures, such as mutual aid agreements, in place long before September 11, 2001,¹⁶ the terrorist attacks and subsequent anthrax events in NCR highlighted the need for better coordination and communication within the region. As a result, WashCOG developed a regional emergency coordination plan (RECP) to facilitate coordination and communication for regional incidents or emergencies. While this new plan and the related procedures represent efforts to improve coordination, more comprehensive planning would include a coordinated regional approach for the use of federal homeland security funds.

NCR is one of the first regions in the country to prepare a regional emergency coordination plan. The plan is intended to provide structure through which the NCR jurisdictions can collaborate on planning, communication, information sharing, and coordination activities before, during, and after a regional emergency. RECP, which is based on FEMA's Federal Response Plan, identifies 15 specific regional emergency support functions, including transportation, hazardous materials, and law enforcement. The Regional Incident Communication and Coordination System (RICCS), which is included in the WashCOG plan, provides a system for WashCOG members, the state of Maryland, the Commonwealth of Virginia, the federal government, public agencies, and others to collaborate in planning, communicating, sharing information, and coordinating activities before, during, and after a regional incident or emergency. RICCS relies on multiple means of communication, including

¹⁶Appendix II of this report describes some of these regional coordination practices.

conference calling, secure Web sites, and wireless communications. The system has been used on several occasions to notify local officials of such events as a demonstration in downtown Washington, D.C., and the October 2002 sniper incidents. For example, RICCS allowed regional school systems to coordinate with one another regarding closure policies during the sniper events.

Planning and Budgeting of Federal Grant Funds Is Not Coordinated among the NCR Jurisdictions

Our work in NCR found that no regional coordination methods have been developed for planning for the use of 15 of the 16 funding sources we reviewed. While the region has experience with working together for regional emergency preparedness and response, NCR officials told us that they have not worked together to develop plans and coordinate expenditures for the use of federal funds. Most NCR jurisdictions did not have a formal overall plan for the use of these funds within their individual jurisdictions. In addition, while the grant recipients are required to report to the administering federal agencies on each individual grant, DHS and ONCRC have not implemented a process to collect and analyze the information reported for NCR as a whole. The one exception to this lack of coordination is UASI, for which ONCRC developed a regional plan for the use of the funds. Internal control standards support developing documentation, such as plans, to assist in controlling management operations and making decisions.¹⁷ Without this type of documentation, it is difficult for ONCRC to monitor the overall use of funds within NCR and to evaluate their effectiveness and plan for future use of grant funds. While some NCR and ONCRC officials said that there was a need for DHS and the NCR jurisdictions to establish controls over how emergency preparedness grant funds are used in the region, they did not indicate any plans to do so.

Within NCR, planning for the use of federal emergency and homeland security grant funds is generally informal and is done separately by each of the NCR jurisdictions. Most of the jurisdictions told us that they have undocumented or informal plans for the uses of the federal grant monies for emergency preparedness activities. Only two jurisdictions have formal written plans that indicate how the jurisdiction would use its federal homeland security grants. NCR states and local jurisdictions had various budgets for uses of emergency preparedness grant funds they received

¹⁷See U.S. General Accounting Office, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, GAO/AIMD-0021.3.1 (Washington, D.C.: November 1999).

from fiscal year 2002 through fiscal year 2003. However, they did not coordinate with one another in defining their emergency preparedness needs, in developing their budgets, or in using the federal grant funds to avoid unnecessary duplication of equipment and other resources within the region. In general, budgeting for the use of federal emergency preparedness grants was done on a grant-by-grant basis within each jurisdiction and is largely based on requests from first responder and emergency management officials. Budgets indicate how the individual jurisdictions intend to spend funds from a specific grant but do not indicate whether those budgets are based on any strategic plan or set of priorities.

One Maryland county developed an overall plan for the use of federal homeland security and emergency preparedness grants. The July 1, 2003, homeland security strategy outlined the priorities for the county in using federal emergency preparedness grant funds. However, it did not specify grants or amounts for each of the initiatives. The priorities for such funding were focused on equipping and training its first responders; conducting exercises and drills for its government employees; training other essential and critical government workers, as well as the citizens and residents of the county; working vigorously to implement recommendations from its Homeland Security Task Force; and solidifying the county's relationships with other federal, state, and regional homeland security entities.

While officials from other NCR jurisdictions do not have a formal plan, some have established a process for reviewing proposals for the use of the homeland security grants. For example, one Northern Virginia jurisdiction recently adopted a planning process in which its Emergency Management Coordination Committee, composed of the county's senior management team, solicits budget proposals from first responder and emergency management agencies for potential grant funds. This committee then makes funding recommendations based upon a review of these proposals and their funding priorities for the county. Officials from other jurisdictions described similar processes for developing budget proposals, but they have not developed longer-term or comprehensive strategic plans.

To determine how the NCR jurisdictions used the funds, we reviewed the use of funds of the Fiscal Year 2002 Department of Defense Supplemental Appropriation, which was the largest source of funding for the period of our review. Each NCR jurisdiction used those funds to buy emergency equipment for first responders. However, officials said they did not coordinate on planning for these expenditures with the other NCR

jurisdictions. For example, five of the eight NCR jurisdictions planned to either purchase or upgrade their command vehicles. One of the jurisdictions allocated \$310,000 for a police command bus and \$350,000 for a fire and rescue command bus; a neighboring jurisdiction allocated \$350,000 for a mobile command unit for its fire department; another jurisdiction allocated \$500,000 for a police command vehicle replacement; a nearby jurisdiction allocated \$149,000 to upgrade its incident command vehicle; and its neighboring jurisdiction allocated \$200,000 to modify and upgrade its mobile command van. In another example, four nearby jurisdictions allocated grant funds on hazardous response vehicles or hazardous materials supplies that reflected costs of \$155,289 for one jurisdiction's rapid hazmat unit, \$355,000 for a neighboring jurisdiction's hazardous materials response vehicle, \$550,000 for a jurisdiction's fire and rescue hazmat unit vehicle, and \$115,246 for a jurisdiction's hazardous materials supplies. While such purchases might not be duplicative, discussions among neighboring jurisdictions could have facilitated a plan and determined whether these purchases were necessary or whether the equipment purchased could be shared among the jurisdictions, thereby freeing up grant dollars for other needed, equipment to create greater combined capacity within the region. Maximizing the use of resources entails avoiding unnecessary duplication wherever possible. This requires some discussion and general agreement on priorities, roles, and responsibilities among the jurisdictions. Some NCR and ONCRC officials said they believed the NCR jurisdictions could plan better to share resources and work to prevent redundancy while avoiding gaps in inventory.

Data on Grants to NCR Jurisdictions Were Not Consistently Available

During our review, NCR jurisdictions and federal grantor agencies could not consistently provide data on the 16 grants and funding sources within the scope of our study, such as award amounts, budgets, and financial records. The individual jurisdictions and ONCRC did not have systems in place to identify and account for all federal grants that can be used to enhance domestic preparedness in NCR and elsewhere. The lack of consistently available budget data for all emergency preparedness and homeland security grants limits the ability to analyze and assess the impact of federal funding and to make management decisions to ensure the effective use of federal grant dollars.

No Central Source Exists for Data on Emergency Preparedness Grants and Information Varies by Jurisdiction

There is no central source within each jurisdiction or at the federal level to identify all of the emergency preparedness grants that have been allocated to NCR. At the local level, such information is needed to meet legislative and regulatory reporting requirements for federal grant expenditures of \$300,000 or more.¹⁸ In addition, each grant has specific reporting requirements, such as quarterly financial status reports, semiannual program progress reports, and related performance information to comply with the Government Performance and Results Act (P.L. 103-62). Moreover, federal grant financial system guidelines require that federal agencies implement systems that include complete, accurate, and prompt generation and maintenance of financial records and transactions. Those federal system requirements also require timely and efficient access to complete and accurate information, without extraneous material, to internal and external parties that require that information.¹⁹ We asked ONCRC, the Virginia and Maryland emergency management agencies, and the eight NCR jurisdictions for data on the emergency preparedness grants allocated in fiscal years 2002 and 2003. ONCRC could not provide a complete list of grants allocated to the NCR as a whole, and the state emergency management agencies did not provide complete lists of grants for NCR jurisdictions within their respective states. For example, the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) provided data on the federal grants for Montgomery and Prince George's counties that were allocated through the state. MEMA is not required to oversee grants not allocated through the state and, therefore, it did not provide grant data on all of the federal grants provided to the two counties. Similarly, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) did not provide data on all of the grants to the jurisdictions in Virginia. We compiled grant data for the NCR jurisdictions by combining information received from the NCR jurisdictions and the state emergency management agencies. This involved contacting several different budget officials at the NCR jurisdictions and at the state level.

The availability of emergency preparedness grant data at the local level also varied by NCR jurisdiction, and complete data were not readily

¹⁸Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 (P.L. 104-156 (1996)). Office of Management and Budget Circular A-133, as revised June 27, 2003. For fiscal years ending after December 31, 2003, the requirements apply to federal grant expenditures of \$500,000 or more.

¹⁹Joint Financial Management Improvement Program *Federal Financial Management System Requirements: Grant Financial System Requirements* (JFMIP-SR-00-3, June 2000).

available. After repeated requests for the grant awards, budgets, and plans over a period of 7 months, NCR jurisdictions or the State emergency management agencies provided us with the grant amounts awarded to them during fiscal years 2002 and 2003. Some jurisdictions provided documentation on amounts awarded, but did not provide supporting budget detail for individual grants to substantiate the amounts awarded. Regarding budgets, we obtained a range of information from the NCR jurisdictions. Some jurisdictions provided budget documentation on all the federal grants that were allocated to them; others provided budget documentation on some of their grants; and two did not provide any grant budget documentation. This lack of supporting documentation indicates a lack of financial controls that should be in place to provide accurate and timely data on federal grants.

Guidance on financial management practices²⁰ notes that to effectively evaluate government programs and spending, Congress and other decision makers must have timely, accurate, and reliable financial information on program cost and performance. Moreover, the Comptroller General's standards for internal control state that "program managers need both operational and financial data to determine whether they are meeting their agencies' strategic and annual performance plans and meeting their goals for accountability for effective and efficient use of resources." These standards stress the importance of this information to make operating decisions, monitor performance, and allocate resources and that "pertinent information is identified, captured, and distributed to the right people in sufficient detail, in the right form, and at the appropriate time to enable them to carry out their duties and responsibilities efficiently and effectively." Having this information could help NCR officials make informed decisions about the use of grant funds in a timely manner.

²⁰See U.S. General Accounting Office, *Executive Guide: Creating Value through World-Class Financial Management*, [GAO/AIMD-00-134](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 2000).

Assessing the Remaining Gaps in NCR is Difficult without Guidance, Reliable Data, or Analysis

Without national standards, guidance on likely scenarios for which to be prepared, plans, and reliable data, NCR officials assess their gaps in preparedness based on their own judgment. The lack of standards and consistently available data makes it difficult for the NCR officials to use the results of DHS's ODP assessment to identify the most critical gaps in capacities and to verify the results of the assessment and establish a baseline that could then be used to develop plans to address outstanding needs. Consequently, it is difficult for us or ONCRC to determine what gaps, if any, remain in the emergency response capacities and preparedness within the NCR. Each jurisdiction provided us with information on their perceived gaps and specific needs for improving emergency preparedness. However, there is no consistent method for identifying these gaps among jurisdictions within NCR. Some officials from NCR jurisdictions said that in the absence of a set of national standards, they use the standards and accreditation guidelines for disciplines such as police, fire, hazardous materials, and emergency management in assessing their individual needs. While these standards may provide some general guidance, some NCR officials said that they need more specific guidance from DHS, including information about threats, guidance on how to set priorities, and standards. Some of the jurisdictions reported that they have conducted their own assessments of need based on their knowledge of threat and risk. Officials from other jurisdictions said they have used FEMA's Local Capability Assessment for Readiness or the hazardous materials assessment to identify areas for improvement.²¹

Several jurisdictions told us that they identify remaining gaps based on requests from emergency responder agencies. Other jurisdictions said that they have established emergency management councils or task forces to review their preparedness needs and begin to develop a more strategic plan for funding those needs. Officials of most NCR jurisdictions commonly identified the need for more comprehensive and redundant communications systems and upgraded emergency operations centers. Some officials of NCR jurisdictions also expressed an interest in training exercises for the region as a whole to practice joint response among the Maryland and Virginia jurisdictions and the District of Columbia.

²¹FEMA's Local Capability Assessment for Readiness is a self-assessment tool that local jurisdictions can use to identify emergency management program strengths and areas needing improvement. The tool encourages collaborative discussions among state, local, and state emergency management agencies and allows emergency managers to evaluate the status of their partnerships with other jurisdictions.

DHS and ONCRC Appear to Have Had a Limited Role in Promoting Regional Coordination in NCR

DHS and ONCRC appear to have played a limited role in fostering a coordinated approach to the use of federal domestic preparedness funds in NCR. According to the former ONCRC Director, ONCRC has focused its initial coordination efforts on the development of a strategy for the use of the UASI funds of \$60.5 million in NCR. However, ONCRC efforts to date have not addressed about \$279.5 million in other federal domestic preparedness funding that we reviewed. According to officials from one NCR jurisdiction, they would like additional support and guidance from DHS on setting priorities for the use of federal funds.

ONCRC Has Focused on Planning for UASI Funding

One of ONCRC's primary responsibilities is to oversee and coordinate federal programs and domestic preparedness initiatives for state, local, and regional authorities in NCR and to cooperate with and integrate the efforts of elected officials of NCR. ONCRC established a governance structure to receive input from state and local authorities through a Senior Policy Group composed of representatives designated by the Governors of Maryland and Virginia and the Mayor of Washington, D.C. The Senior Policy Group developed the UASI strategy to fund a range of projects that would enhance regional capabilities to improve preparedness and reduce the vulnerability of NCR to terrorist attacks. (See table 5.) According to ONCRC's former Director, the strategy for UASI was an attempt to force a new paradigm, by developing a regional plan for the use of the funds, with input from outside organizations in addition to representatives from the local jurisdictions. The plan for the \$60.5 million allocated funds for projects, including planning, training, equipment, and exercises to benefit the region as a whole, as opposed to allocating funds to meet the individual needs of each NCR jurisdiction separately. The former Director said that funding allocations to these regional projects were based on a summary of the results of the assessment that was completed by each NCR jurisdiction.

NCR Jurisdictions Expressed Mixed Views on ONCRC's Effectiveness

Officials from NCR state and local jurisdictions expressed mixed opinions on the effectiveness of ONCRC. Officials from a Virginia jurisdiction expressed a need for more guidance on how to set priorities and allocate federal domestic preparedness funding. District of Columbia officials said ONCRC has done a good job of coordination and has been very supportive, given its small staff and the newness of the office. Some noted that ONCRC's role is still evolving. For example, some officials in one jurisdiction said that ONCRC's long-term mission has not yet been finalized and ONCRC is still in the process of establishing its role within NCR. The officials believe that ONCRC has significant potential for leading

and coordinating homeland security efforts in the region. They recommended that ONCRC become a routine part of regional governance and provide guidance to local governments, focus resources, and enhance the ability of localities to work together to implement homeland security strategies. The officials noted that ONCRC's efforts were motivated primarily by the leadership of the Director and had not become routine.

We discussed NCR officials' views with the former ONCRC Director. He acknowledged that ONCRC's initial efforts to coordinate the use of federal grant funds in NCR concentrated on implementing UASI. He said that UASI presented an improvement over previous funding allocations in NCR by allocating funds on a regional basis—rather than jurisdictional perceptions—that considered the results of an assessment of NCR preparedness levels and requirements. The Director said that ONCRC could consider coordinating for other federal programs in addition to UASI, but he did not indicate any concrete plans to do so.

Conclusions

The nation's ongoing vulnerability to terrorist attacks after September 11, 2001, is magnified in NCR because it is the location of critical government infrastructure, national and international institutions, and significant landmarks. In addition to NCR, there are several other high-threat urban areas that share similar vulnerabilities, and improving homeland security is a concern for the entire nation. The challenges faced in NCR—a lack of performance standards; baseline information on preparedness and threat and risk scenarios, plans based on those tools, and reliable data to report on the status of initiatives—are fundamental obstacles in achieving desired levels of preparedness. Furthermore, NCR's complex structure requires working with individual political jurisdictions with varying experience in managing homeland security funds and responding to emergencies. This adds to the challenge of developing and implementing a coordinated plan for enhancing first responder capacity.

Effective regional and local management of the large amounts of available homeland security funding is an important element in improving our national preparedness. However, it is difficult for regional coordinators and local jurisdictions to avoid duplication and inefficiency in the procurement of goods and services without a knowledge of all the grants that can be leveraged to fight the terror threat; without centralized, standard records to account for the use of those grants; and without a coordinated regional plan for using those funds. It is also difficult to target funding in a way that ensures it is used for goods and services that enhance preparedness and response without current threat information or

scenarios and standards that reflect performance goals for preparedness and response. The approach taken in planning for the use of the UASI funds, with its emphasis on regional allocations, is a step toward improved coordination that could provide a more rational and effective method for enhancing emergency preparedness within NCR. In addition, DHS's recently released strategic plan and the endorsement of standards for equipment represent steps toward addressing some of the challenges noted in this report. However, more needs to be done to develop plans, monitor the use of funds, and assess against goals and standards to evaluate progress toward improved homeland security.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To help ensure that emergency preparedness grants and associated funds are managed in a way that maximizes their effectiveness, we recommend that the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security take the following three actions in order to fulfill the department's statutory responsibilities in the NCR:

- work with the NCR jurisdictions to develop a coordinated strategic plan to establish goals and priorities for enhancing first responder capacities that can be used to guide the use of federal emergency preparedness funds;
- monitor the plan's implementation to ensure that funds are used in a way that promotes effective expenditures that are not unnecessarily duplicative; and
- identify and address gaps in emergency preparedness and evaluate the effectiveness of expenditures in meeting those needs by adapting standards and preparedness guidelines based on likely scenarios for NCR and conducting assessments based on them.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

On April 29, 2004, we provided a draft of this report to the Secretary of DHS and to ONCRC's Senior Policy Group for comment. On May 19, 2004, we received comments from DHS's GAO/OIG Liaison and the Senior Policy Group that are reprinted in appendix III and IV, respectively.

DHS and the Senior Policy Group generally agreed with our recommendations but also stated that NCR jurisdictions had worked cooperatively together to identify opportunities for synergies and lay a foundation for meeting the challenges noted in the report. DHS and the Senior Policy Group also agreed that there is a need to continue to improve preparedness by developing more specific and improved preparedness standards, clearer performance goals, and an improved

method for tracking regional initiatives. In addition, DHS identified the following concerns:

- DHS stated that the report demonstrated a fundamental misunderstanding regarding homeland security grant programs in NCR and the oversight role and responsibilities of ONCRC. DHS stated that GAO fails to distinguish between funds provided to specific jurisdictions for local priorities and enhancements and funds intended to address regional needs. We disagree. The responsibilities of ONCRC are outlined in the Homeland Security Act and on page 8 of this report. These include activities such as coordinating with federal, state, and regional agencies and the private sector to ensure adequate planning and execution of domestic preparedness activities among these agencies and entities, and assessing and advocating for resources that state, local, and regional authorities in the NCR need to implement efforts to secure the homeland. The responsibilities further require an annual report to Congress that identifies resources required to implement homeland security efforts in NCR, assesses progress made in implementing these efforts, and makes recommendations regarding additional resources needed. In order to fulfill this mandate, ONCRC needs information on how all grant monies have been used, not just those designated specifically for regional purposes, information on how those expenditures have enhanced first responder capacity in the region, and an ability to coordinate all federal domestic preparedness funding sources to NCR.
- DHS noted that our report recognizes the importance of a coordinated regionwide plan for establishing first responder goals, needs, and priorities and assessing the benefits of all expenditures to enhance first responder capabilities, and our review found that no such coordination methods have been developed. DHS stated that this task is accomplished by the formal NCR Review and Recommendation Process, adopted on February 4, 2004, which ensures coordination of resources among all jurisdictions within NCR. DHS provided us information on this process at our exit conference on April 15, 2004. DHS explained that the Review and Recommendation Process was developed for the UASI program, and ONCRC and NCR officials are in the process of extending it to additional federal programs. While this process could be used to facilitate the development of a regional plan in the future, the process has not included a review of how federal grants have already been used or the development of a coordinated regional plan for establishing needs and priorities and assessing benefits of all federal domestic preparedness programs.

Finally, the comments noted a correction to our draft regarding the establishment of the Senior Policy Group, and we have revised the report accordingly.

As agreed with your office, unless you release this report earlier, we will not distribute it until 30 days from the date of this letter. At that time, we will send copies to relevant congressional committees and subcommittees, to the Secretary of Homeland Security, to members of the NCR Senior Policy Group, and to other interested parties. We will also make copies available to others upon request. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on GAO's Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you have any questions about this report or wish to discuss it further, please contact me at (202) 512-8777 or Patricia A. Dalton, Director, (202) 512-6737. Key contributors to this report are listed in appendix V.

Sincerely yours,



William O. Jenkins, Jr.
Director, Homeland Security
and Justice Issues

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

We met with and obtained documentation from officials of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the Office for Domestic Preparedness; the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (WashCOG); the homeland security advisers and officials from the emergency management agencies for the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia; and first responder officials from the National Capital Region (NCR) jurisdictions, including the District of Columbia; the city of Alexandria; and the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William in Virginia; and Montgomery and Prince Georges counties in Maryland.

To determine what federal funds have been provided to local jurisdictions for emergency preparedness, for what specific purposes, and from what sources, we met with officials from the DHS's Office for National Capital Region Coordination (ONCRC), ONCRC's Senior Policy Group, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), homeland security advisers for the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, and first responders from eight jurisdictions within NCR—the District of Columbia; the city of Alexandria; and Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties. We identified 25 emergency preparedness programs that provided funding to NCR, and we selected 16 for our detailed review. These 16 programs were selected to cover a range of programs, including the largest funding sources; grants provided for general purposes such as equipment and training; and grants provided for specific purposes, such as fire prevention and bioterrorism. We obtained and reviewed the emergency preparedness grant data for the period of October 2001 through September 30, 2003, including grant awards, budgets, and detailed plans for purchases, such as equipment and supplies, communications, and training and exercises. To the extent possible, we independently verified the data we received on funds available and the planned and actual use of those funds by comparing federal, state, and local data sources. Our review revealed the lack of consistent data reported by the jurisdictions in the region and the lack of a central source for such data. For example, NCR state and local jurisdictions vary in their ability to provide budget information on the emergency preparedness and homeland security grants they received. Also, DHS and ONCRC do not have systems in place to account for all federal homeland security and emergency preparedness grants covering their respective jurisdictions.

To determine the regional coordination practices and remaining challenges to implementing regional preparedness programs in NCR, we met with officials from WashCOG, DHS, Virginia, Maryland, and local NCR jurisdictions. Oral and documentary evidence obtained from these officials

has provided us with an overall perspective on the status of coordination for homeland security within the region and remaining challenges to implementing effective homeland security measures in NCR. We also talked with officials about regional programs that have been successfully implemented in NCR.

To determine the gaps that exist in emergency preparedness in NCR, we obtained oral and documentary information from officials of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments; DHS; the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia emergency management agencies; homeland security advisers; and local first responders. Our discussions with these officials provide their views of the state of preparedness in NCR. We also obtained information from these officials regarding their plans to address those emergency preparedness gaps. In addition, we reviewed relevant reports, studies, and guidelines to provide context for assessing preparedness. However, there are no uniform standards or criteria by which to measure gaps, and self-reported information from local jurisdictions may not be objective.

To determine DHS's role in enhancing the preparedness of NCR through coordinating the use of federal emergency preparedness grants, assessing preparedness, providing guidance, targeting funds to enhance preparedness, and monitoring the use of those funds, we met with DHS, as well as with state homeland security advisers, state emergency management officials, and local first responders. We obtained and analyzed verbal and documentary evidence on the ODP assessment completed by the NCR jurisdictions, and how that assessment was used, as well as other actions DHS had taken to facilitate homeland security coordination within NCR.

Finally, we contacted the District of Columbia Auditor, the Maryland Office of Legislative Audits, and the Virginia Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to inform them of our review and determine if the agencies had related past or ongoing work. None of the agencies had conducted or planned to conduct reviews of emergency preparedness or homeland security in the NCR.

We conducted our review from June 2003 to February 2004 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Appendix II: NCR Jurisdictions’ Arrangements to Respond to Public Safety Emergencies

NCR jurisdictions over the years have implemented various mechanisms to ensure planned and coordinated interjurisdictional approaches to the activities of first responders and other public safety professionals. These efforts involve the activities of regional planning and coordinating bodies, such as the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (WashCOG), the regional metropolitan planning organization, and mutual assistance agreements between the first responders of neighboring NCR jurisdictions.

Regional Bodies Facilitate Coordination Efforts in Other Areas

Planning and coordinating bodies have existed in NCR for many years. WashCOG is a regional entity that includes all the jurisdictions within the region. Other planning and coordinating organizations exist in both Maryland and Virginia.

WashCOG is a nonprofit association representing local governments in the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia. Founded in 1957, WashCOG is supported by financial contributions from its 19 participating local governments, federal and state grants and contracts, and donations from foundations and the private sector. WashCOG’s members are the governing officials from local NCR governments, plus area delegation members from Maryland and Virginia legislatures, the U. S. Senate, and the House of Representatives. According to WashCOG, the council provides a focus for action and develops regional responses to such issues as the environment, affordable housing, economic development, health and family concerns, human services, population growth, public safety, and transportation. The full membership, acting through its board of directors, sets WashCOG policies. The National Capital Region Preparedness Council is an advisory body that makes policy recommendations to the board of directors and makes procedural and other recommendations to various regional agencies with emergency preparedness responsibilities or operational response authority. The council also oversees the regional emergency coordination plan.

Other regional coordinating bodies exist in the National Capital Region, including the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC), the Maryland Terrorism Forum, and the Maryland Emergency Management Assistance Compact. NVRC is one of the 21 planning district commissions in Virginia. A 42-member board of commissioners composed of elected officials and citizen representatives all appointed by 14 member localities establishes NVRC’s programs and policies. The commission is supported by annual contributions from its member local governments, by appropriations of the Virginia General Assembly, and by grants from

federal and state governments and private foundations. According to a NVRC official, the commission established an emergency management council to coordinate programs, funding issues, and equipment needs. The emergency management council is composed of local chief administrative officers, fire chiefs, police chiefs, and public works managers.

In 1998, the Governor of Maryland established the Maryland Terrorism Forum to prepare the state to respond to acts of terrorism, especially those involving weapons of mass destruction. The forum also serves as the key means of integrating all services within federal, state, and local entities as well as key private organizations. The forum’s executive committee, composed of agency directors and cabinet members, provides policy guidance and recommendations to the steering committee; which addresses policy concerns. According to Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) officials, the forum’s first focus was on planning in terms of equipment interoperability; evacuation planning; and commonality of standards, procedures, and vocabulary. The forum is in the process of hiring a full-time planner for preparedness assessment and strategic planning for the region.

Mutual Aid Agreements Are in Place within NCR

The terrorist attacks in New York City and on the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, security preparations during the World Bank demonstrations, and the sniper incidents in the summer and fall of 2002 highlighted the need for enhanced mutual cooperation and aid in responding to emergencies. Several NCR jurisdiction public safety officials told us that mutual aid agreements have worked well and are examples of regional programs that have been successfully implemented in NCR. Mutual aid agreements provide a structure for assistance and for sharing resources among jurisdictions in preparing for and responding to emergencies and disasters. Because individual jurisdictions may not have all the resources they need to acquire equipment and respond to all types of emergencies and disasters, these agreements allow for resources to be regionally distributed and quickly deployed. These agreements provide opportunities for state and local governments to share services, personnel, supplies, and equipment. Mutual aid agreements can be both formal and informal and provide cooperative planning, training, and exercises in preparation for emergencies and disasters.

For over 40 years, jurisdictions in the National Capital Region have been supporting one another through mutual aid agreements. According to a WashCOG official, the agency has brokered and facilitated most of these agreements and acts as an informal secretariat for mutual aid issues.

According to WashCOG, there are currently 21 mutual aid agreements in force among one or more of the 18 member jurisdictions, covering one or more issues. These can be as broad as a police services support agreement among 12 jurisdictions and as restricted as a two-party agreement relating to control over the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. In September 2001, for example, WashCOG member jurisdictions developed planning guidance for health system response to a bioterrorism event in NCR. The purpose of this guidance is to strengthen the health care response systems allowing them to, among other things, improve early recognition and provide mass care. According to WashCOG, the planning guidance was developed through the cooperative effort of more than 225 individuals representing key government and private elements with NCR that would likely be involved should such an event occur.

The Maryland Emergency Management Assistance Compact is a mutual aid compact established to help Maryland's local jurisdictions support one another with their resources during emergencies and disasters and facilitate efficient operational procedures. The compact establishes partnerships among local jurisdictions so that resources can be requested and provided in response to emergencies and disasters. In addition to helping local governments and their emergency response agencies develop risk management decisions, the compact provides a framework that will increase accessibility for maximum compensation in federally declared disasters. The compact, established by legislation in June 2002, is modeled after the Emergency Management Assistance Compact with 48 states and two U.S. territories participating in interstate mutual aid.

Appendix III: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528



**Homeland
Security**

May 19, 2004

William O. Jenkins, Jr.
Director, Homeland Security and Justice Issues
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

RE: Draft report, "Homeland Security: National Capital Region (NCR) Grant Management Issues Reflect the Need for Coordinated Planning and Performance Standards, GAO 04-433, Job Code 440221"

Dear Mr. Jenkins:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the subject draft report. The Department of Homeland Security largely agrees with GAO on the majority of the recommendations. In response to an overarching theme in the draft report, we note that the Department has implemented performance goals and measures at major program levels as was contained in its Performance Budget Overview, submitted with the Congressional Justification to the President's FY 2005 Budget. Thus, it is our view that the recommendation that this practice be implemented at the NCR level is well underway towards completion. This letter also identifies concerns about the manner in which information is being presented in the draft report.

The draft report demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding regarding the homeland security grant programs in the NCR. With the exception of the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Grant Program, federal financial assistance is provided directly to State and local agencies to enhance specific preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities. Largely, administration and coordination of these grant programs is the responsibility of the State. The UASI Grant Program was established to build an enhanced and sustainable capacity to prevent, respond to, and recover from threats or acts of terrorism for selected urban areas. This program has the unique requirement for State and local agencies to coordinate the allocation of funds on a regional basis. The GAO fails to make the distinction between the funds that were given to specific jurisdictions for local priorities and enhancements and those intended to address complex and unique regional needs.

The report recognizes the importance of a coordinated, region-wide plan for establishing first responder goals, needs, and priorities and assessing the benefits of all expenditures to enhance first responder capabilities. The report states that no such NCR-wide coordination methods have been developed. However, this complex task is accomplished by the formal NCR Review and Recommendation Process that ensures coordination of resources among all jurisdictions within the NCR. This regional process

www.dhs.gov

and accompanying governance structure, adopted on February 4, 2004, defines the roles of the NCR Senior Policy Group, the Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) and the NCR Emergency Preparedness Council (EPC) that accomplish the essential region-wide coordination.

With respect to funding decisions and priorities, the GAO inaccurately characterizes the role of the Office of National Capital Region Coordination (ONCRC) as one of federal control and direction rather than coordination and cooperation. It is important to note that the governance structure for the NCR was founded on the principles of full disclosure of information, joint decision-making, and equality of parties. The ONCRC works collaboratively with the SPG, CAOs, and EPC to establish funding decisions and priorities. As such, the ONCR in cooperation with the Office for Domestic Preparedness sponsored the first regional risk, capabilities and needs assessment resulting in the first Urban Area Homeland Security Strategy for the NCR.

We note factual errors regarding the genesis of the NCR SPG. The draft report states (page 2) that the ONCRC established the SPG. In fact, the group was established by mutual commitment from the chief executive officials from the State of Maryland, Commonwealth of Virginia, District of Columbia, and the Department of Homeland Security. In addition, the draft report references (page5) ONCRC based spending decisions. In fact, spending decisions relative to the grant program are made in a systematic and coordinated way via the NCR Review and Recommendation Process mentioned above.

For all the progress made in the NCR to increase preparedness, the Department realizes, and your draft report supports the fact, that we need to continue on the path of improvement by developing more specific and improved preparedness standards, clearer performance goals, and establishing an improved method for tracking regional initiatives. As noted above, the Department has built a great deal of the foundation for meeting the challenges noted in the report and will continue to work toward meeting those challenges.

Sincerely,


Anna F. Dixon
Director, Bankcard Programs and
GAO/OIG Liaison

Appendix IV: Comments from the National Capital Region's Senior Policy Group

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION
SENIOR POLICY GROUP
MD • DC • VA



18 May 2004

William O. Jenkins, Jr.
Director, Homeland Security and Justice Issues
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Jenkins:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft report "Homeland Security: National Capital Region Grant Management Issues Reflect the Need for Coordinated Planning and Performance Standards." The National Capital Region Senior Policy Group generally agrees with the GAO on the majority of the recommendations, however, we would like to address several issues. In addition, the District of Columbia has provided comments specific its grant management practices in the enclosure.

The creation of the Senior Policy Group was undertaken in the spring of 2002, well in advance of Administration or Congressional action to create the Department of Homeland Security/ONCIRC. The two Governors and Mayor recognized the coordination challenge and the critical roles of the two states and the District towards enhancing cooperation. Encouraged by both expanding White House commitment to address federal executive branch coordination issues and concurrent NCR Congressional delegation efforts to bring a more orderly approach to the plethora of federal funding requests across the region, the Governors and Mayor initiated the executive level coordination group. This group later became known as the Senior Policy Group.

The report identifies that Health and Human Services programs were among those reviewed. We believe it fails to accurately portray the performance metrics that HHS established and the tremendous progress that has been documented by Virginia, Maryland and District agencies towards health and medical readiness. The HHS programs required deliberate objectives for preparedness and documented evidence to support their accomplishment.

Additionally, the National Capital Region experienced significant federal financial assistance in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks. The report correctly notes that the FY '02 Defense Supplemental accounted for nearly \$230 million or 68% of the nearly \$340 million in direct aid to the NCR. The total figure does not include specific allocations to the District and two states that provide additional support to NCR communities. A recurring theme in the report is the apparent absence of performance metrics and deliberate planning process to guide expenditures. It is important that characterization of the efforts of local communities or federal agencies be placed into the appropriate context of the environment during 2002. The United States, including the NCR, during that period was still very much in a crisis reactive mode. While difficult to quantify, the combined efforts of local, state/District and federal authorities to identify and exploit opportunities for synergy among initiatives has been outstanding. Doing so in the midst of a "crisis reactive mode" has been impressive and points to the desire for success across all levels of government.

The absence of measurement data should not be presented in the context of a failure of any one level of government. The ONCRC is a coordination entity that must work with and through others. They are not staffed to, nor is it appropriate that they directly oversee the efforts of a community, state/District or federal agency. The goal from the beginning has been to better coordinate and facilitate integration of effort and not to create duplicative and competing organizational structures. The ONCRC, Senior Policy Group and the local Chief Administrative Officials have worked to maintain organizational discipline – maintaining proven relationships between levels and agencies of government as well as successful processes for grant management. NCR local, state and federal agencies have been aggressively surveyed by a host of organizations during the past 18 months. Data not being provided to the GAO may simply point to "survey fatigue" rather than the absence of data.

Finally, the report does not provide the full picture of the challenge – the critical importance of integrating private sector initiatives as part of the larger effort. There are significant policy issues that are being considered within the context of the private sector's role within the NCR and the commitment of public funds to address priority needs has been given careful attention. At the end of the day preparedness is not simply about public sector readiness but the private sector as well. Report discussion should focus on planning processes and measurement criteria in the context of both the public and private sectors.

The acknowledgement of progress made thus far in increasing the preparedness of the National Capital Region is appreciated and we agree that we must continue to work towards improved preparedness through the development of preparedness standards, clear performance goals and the establishment of an improved method for tracking regional initiatives. Work must be done to ensure that the efforts of the ONCRC, SPG and the localities, which have given us a solid framework, are not lost in a mix of misunderstandings. We are looking forward to working together to build upon our improved preparedness efforts in the NCR. We appreciate GAO's continuing commitment to helping us improve our grants management process.

Sincerely,

National Capital Region
Senior Policy Group

Barbara Childs-Par
Barbara Childs-Par
Director
DC Emergency Management Agency

Thomas Lockwood
Thomas Lockwood
Deputy Director
Maryland Office of Homeland Security

Rafael Saadeddin MNK
Margret Kellems
Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice
District of Columbia

Dennis Schrader
Dennis Schrader
Director
Maryland Office of Homeland Security

George W. Foresman
George W. Foresman
Assistant to the Governor
Commonwealth Preparedness

Enclosure

Introduction

Thank you for forwarding the GAO report, GAO-04-433, to this office for review. The report accurately describes issues associated with grant administration across the country. It does not, however, adequately detail the process developed by the District for administering state and regional grant funds, coordination of programmatic planning and response issues. A detailed outline of this process is described below which has and will continue to allow for coordinated grants administration and strategic planning for enhancing the District's and NCR's preparedness, performance standards, and a reliable, central source of data on funds available and the purpose for which they were spent.

History

The Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice (DMPSJ), Executive Office of the Mayor of the Government of the District of Columbia has been tasked by the Mayor to lead the District's efforts relating to Homeland Security. In this regard, the Deputy Mayor is responsible for oversight of all spending related to special appropriations, regional planning for Homeland Security, inter- and intra-agency planning (with federal, state and local governments), and the development of a Homeland Security Strategy for the District. The District of Columbia has also received significant resources to support equipment, planning, training, and exercise needs associated with emergency preparedness and Homeland Security. It is critical that spending associated with these resources is efficient and effective to ensure that the maximum benefit is derived.

In order to provide for more effective and cohesive oversight of Emergency Preparedness and Homeland Security activities, the Federal Department of Homeland Security (DHS) now requires that DHS grants (including Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA; and Office of Domestic Preparedness, ODP grants) being awarded to states (and municipalities in the case of the District) be funneled through a single State Administrative Agent (SAA). The Mayor of the District of Columbia has appointed the DMPSJ as the Homeland Security point of contact through which all grant monies must be administered. Additionally, the District was chosen as the Administrative Agent for grants awarded to the NCR, made up of twelve jurisdictions within MD, VA and D.C. This role requires unprecedented cooperative efforts between the jurisdictions, and the creation of innovative processes for both managing and dispensing the grant funds.

As the established Administrative Agent for both State and Regional funds, the DMPSJ has become the *defacto* administrator of related DHS grants. The administration of these grants requires specialized knowledge in the area of Emergency Preparedness and Homeland Security as well as the development of unique legal and procedural parameters. DMPSJ has provided a structure and operational support methodology for the coordination and development of policy and strategy regarding homeland security issues and administration of homeland security grants.

Structure

The DMPSJ has established a team that has developed a comprehensive, management structure for the administration of grant funds that abide by the guidelines established by DHS. The objective of this team is to provide comprehensive oversight and management of grant funds at the District Agency and Regional levels as to improve mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities for all hazards. The following represent this team's specific priorities under DMSPJ:

- Improve the Districts' and the Region's administration of grant funding for disaster response and recovery capabilities by developing and maintaining an understanding of integrated operational capability developed in coordination with our Federal partners, volunteer organizations, universities, and the private sector.
- Assist all levels of District and Regional government, first responders, volunteer groups, universities, and the public in meeting the responsibilities of public emergencies and challenges, through program management and coordination activities.
- Use baseline program evaluation strategies to identify emergency preparedness areas in need of improvement. This will allow for a methodology for strategic planning and the justification of resource allotment.
- Provide critical information to Congress, the public, the media, and the emergency management community by maintaining strict spending and activity records and by building partnerships with and among Federal and Regional entities, District agencies, other responder organizations, and the private sector.

Operations

This team's proposed approach to performing the work is highlighted below, including a variety of solutions to employ.

Grants Administration

ODP's current methodology for evaluating homeland security strategies and related grant activity includes the categories of Preparedness, Response, and Recovery which are further divided into Planning, Training, Exercises and Equipment. However, according to new literature, DHS is strongly encouraging States to begin using the established baseline assessments as a basis for developing work plans and performance evaluations. The team has incorporated both the current ODP standards into an ongoing strategy development, development of protocols and staffing plans, and categorizing grant spending. This has allowed for comprehensive and flexible tracking ability, broader capabilities applying for future grants, and greater organization in responding to information requests. However, the team is not limited to only this framework. Rather, its structure will allow for adaptation to any new standards that future Federal guidelines may require.

Proposed Grant Process

The following is an outline of the grant process that the team has applied and will modify as additional grants are managed and additional evaluation requirements are requested.

- 1) In the future, the SAA may have to apply for federal funds. Currently, these funds are directly awarded to both the District and the NCR.
- 2) A Federal grant is awarded and letter is sent to the SAA. At this point, the SAA will be decided whether a contract or a sub grant is the more appropriate vehicle for expending funds on each project. If the sub grant is decided as the best vehicle the team will request budget authority for funds through city council and establish budget fund codes (attributes).
- 3) The team will perform the following tasks during the same time frame:
 - a. Complete and obtain the SAA's approval for Sub grant Certification Form (SCF)
 - b. Publish Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) on DC Register and any other venue HSO has chosen with intentions of reaching the most appropriate applicant pool. It is accepted

audit standards require that a minimum of three venues are needed for the publication of NOFA.

- c. Prepare Request for Applications (RFA) in order to make available to applicants (requirements are set forth in DCMR ch 50 Title 1)
- 4) The team will put together an independent review panel (3 members minimum) and will develop criteria by which the panel will rate grant applications. For State related grant funds, this team will consist of representatives from the Fire and Police departments and the Emergency Management Agency. Currently, the Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) represent this panel for the NCR and review all grant applications in order to make a determination on which applications will be funded from Regional grant funds.
- 5) The team will hold a meeting w/ the panelists to instruct on the grant, applications, criteria, etc.
- 6) The team will sponsor a pre-application conference for all possible awardees.
- 7) Applications are submitted to the team for preliminary review/pre-screening then forwarded to the independent panel for evaluation against the pre-established criteria.
- 8) A Independent Panel will review applications and submit their recommendations for best proposal.
- 9) The team will review all applications submitted to the panel and consider the panel's recommendations. The team's recommendations will be forwarded along with the panel's recommendations to the SAA for review.
- 10) Sub grant Competitive Review Forms (SCRFs) will be forwarded to the City Council for approval if the sub grant is associated with the District and is over \$1 million or will be forwarded to the Senior Policy Group (SPG), or other designee, if the sub grant is associated with the Region.
- 11) The team will create sub grant packages and forward them to the SAA for signature.
- 12) The Team will notify unsuccessful applicants *before* awards are sent to successful applicants.
- 13) If the sub grant award is *internal* to the District, the Project Manager (PM) for finance will sign a MOU/IDSR (in addition to the sub grant documents) to authorize transfer of budget authority. The team will forward the entire package on to sub grantee agencies. Sub grantees must then follow up to ensure that budget authority has been transferred appropriately, so they can enter purchase requisitions.
- 14) If the sub grant award is *external* to the District, the team will send the award package to the sub grantee for signature. The PM for finance will open a blanket purchase order which will be used to reimburse the sub grantee periodically.
- 15) The team will host a pre-award conference with new sub grantees to describe the grant process and educate sub grantees on Federal standards and requirements.
- 16) The team will continue to monitor progress, appropriate expenditure, compliance, etc. (including on-site visits.) Finance staff will monitor financial compliance and appropriate reimbursement.
- 17) The team will send appropriate progress reports to the sponsoring Federal agency.
- 18) The team will ensure complete/proper close-out of grants
- 19) The team will ensure retention of records for appropriate time period.

The team has and will continue to manage the grants in accordance with the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments, also called The Common Rule, which is included in the Code of Federal Regulations at 44 CFR 13.

Homeland Security Policy and Strategy Coordination for the District

The team is also responsible for policy and strategy coordination that assists in the development of support materials for the City's Homeland Security and emergency preparedness programs and strategies. Activities include: coordinating the creation of Homeland Security strategies; meeting logistical support; attending various meetings and providing meeting notes; attending conference calls; researching and

responding to FIOA requests; coordinating responses to media requests; developing briefings; and drafting information for reports and testimony. Products and activities include but are not limited to:

- Drafts of Homeland Security strategies reflecting the input of all players/parties.
- Supporting documentation and materials;
- Draft reports;
- Testimony support materials for City Council and Congressional hearings;
- Briefings and other written documents;
- Coordinating Emergency Management and Preparedness efforts between various local, regional and Federal agencies;
- Coordinating tasks and projects with the DC Emergency Management Agency;
- Research, in response to information requests from key District agencies responsible for emergency preparedness;
- Preparation and logistic organization in support of the Director and the Deputy Mayor for various conferences and meetings; and
- Organization and summarization of meetings of various task forces and steering committees of which the DMPSJ is a member or chair

Due to the nature of the work required in the realm of Homeland Security, emergencies and special events may arise. The Policy and Strategy Coordination component of the team has and will provide assistance for quick turn around, short-term projects. These efforts may require immediate response and coordination with DMPSJ and EOM staff, such as last minute meeting logistics or compiling information to meet urgent deadlines.

Conclusion

The District and the NCR has and will continue to obtain numerous benefits from the approach presented in this response. Through the establishment of this structure, the District and the NCR have and will continue to:

- Identify target opportunities that provide the ability to improve skills, build resources, and establish meaningful and effective partnerships, both internally within the District and with neighboring jurisdictions and Federal and private/public organizations;
- Demonstrate accountability related to grant funding and other legal, regulatory, and related obligations;
- Heighten the region's ability to track expenditures, resources, and data, which will aid in reporting against grant (and other types of) requirements;
- Aid leadership and front-line managers in strategic, policy, and operational decision-making, through enhanced access to better, more reliable information;
- Be able to respond to inquiries from and be proactive in presenting information to Congress, the media, grant providers, partner organizations, citizens, and other involved and interested parties; and
- Most importantly, enhance the overall readiness and capability to protect citizens, institutions, and property against risks posed by terrorism, natural disasters and emergencies, and technological incidents that could disrupt, impede, or threaten the safety and well-being of the broader metropolitan Washington DC community.

Appendix V: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contacts

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Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to those mentioned above, Ernie Hazera and Amelia Shachoy (Strategic Issues) and Wendy Johnson, Jack Bagnulo, David Brown, R. Rochelle Burns (Homeland Security and Justice) made key contributions to this report.

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