



Report In Brief

U.S. Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General

October 7, 2010



Why We Did this Review

We audited NTIA's management of the PSIC program to determine whether

- (1) the program was operating efficiently, with grantees procuring communications equipment;
- (2) the program would effectively enable the grant recipients to complete their interoperable communications projects before the program's deadline; and
- (3) whether technical assistance provided by NTIA and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be effective in assisting grantees achieve program goals.

Background

The Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005 authorized NTIA, in consultation with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), to implement the PSIC program—a \$1 billion one-time, formula-based matching grant program intended to enable public safety agencies to establish interoperable emergency communications systems using reallocated radio spectrum.

The original award period for PSIC grants ran from October 1, 2007, to September 30, 2010. In November 2009, the President signed an act extending the award period to September 30, 2011.

The Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 requires the Commerce Inspector General to conduct an annual assessment of the PSIC program and report our findings to Congress.

National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

Second Annual Assessment of the Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) Grant Program (OIG-11-001-A)

What We Found

This report details our second annual assessment of NTIA's PSIC grants management for the year ended September 30, 2009, with selected updates through March 31, 2010.

We found that grantees are making progress in meeting the goal of obtaining communications equipment for use by local public safety agencies. We did not find any indication that grantees will not meet the PSIC award period deadline. However, grantees are having difficulty meeting and documenting nonfederal matching fund requirements. Also, NTIA has not closely monitored the grantees to prevent ineligible matching share claims.

NTIA and FEMA have released several guidance documents, conducted workshops, and held conferences to help grant recipients achieve the goals of the PSIC program. Their assistance will benefit grantees that are trying to meet the obligations of the program before the deadline for funding is reached.

What We Recommended

In our draft report, we recommended that NTIA and the FEMA Grant Programs Directorate closely monitor grantees' matching shares to ensure that matches directly benefit the PSIC grant program, meet eligibility, and are properly reported.

In their responses, NTIA and FEMA both concurred with our recommendation. NTIA stated that it would continue its efforts to monitor matching shares, and FEMA listed several activities it has undertaken or planned to help grantees understand the matching share requirements.