Testimony of Joshua D Filler
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The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Emergency Management, Intergovernmental Relations and the
District of Columbia

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Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Begich, Ranking Member Paul and other distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. I'm Joshua Filler, President of Filler Security Strategies a homeland security consulting firm in Washington, DC. Since 2006 I have worked with major urban areas and states from around the nation on homeland security risk assessments, preparedness assessments, grant evaluations and strategic plans. I have also served as an advisor to several local public safety associations on homeland security preparedness matters.

Prior to my private practice, I was the first director of the Office of State and Local Government Coordination at the Department of Homeland Security from 2003 to 2005. At DHS I served as a senior advisor to the Secretary of Homeland Security, and as a member of the Secretary's Emergency Response Group. My office was responsible for coordinating the programs of the Department as they relate to state and local governments, including the creation of many of the Department's current preparedness grant programs.

Prior to joining DHS, I was Director of Local Affairs for the White House Office of Homeland Security. Before joining the White House, I served in the Cabinet of the Mayor of New York City as the Legislative Director to the Mayor and Chief of Staff in the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Operations where my work included oversight of the New York Police Department, Fire Department and other city agencies. After September 11, 2001, I was responsible for emergency operational issues and managing contacts with local, state and federal officials on behalf of New York City in connection with the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.

It is my privilege today to discuss with you issues surrounding our nation's preparedness, how to evaluate it, and what impacts homeland security grants have had on preparedness at the local, state and national level.

The Preparedness Cycle

Preparedness is a cyclical process, as opposed to a linear endeavor in which there is a defined end. This is why the term "preparedness cycle" is used by DHS and others to explain the preparedness process. When it comes to preparedness there is no "end state" because risks change, plans need updating, training for new personnel is required, and equipment is replaced or upgraded, and so on. As long as there are risks, there will be a need to prepare for them and resource those preparedness efforts whatever the source.

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The Role of the Grants

The purpose of homeland security grants such as the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) and State Homeland Security Program (SHSP) is to supplement local and state spending to allow urban areas and states to build capabilities that bridge traditional domestic public safety, largely handled by states and localities, with national security imperatives, traditionally managed by the federal government. Without such funding, states and urban areas would not have the resources to develop capability levels to integrate those missions.

Grant Effectiveness versus Overall Preparedness

Measuring the effectiveness of specific grant programs is different than measuring overall preparedness. Grant effectiveness is about how grants impact capabilities and preparedness. However, the overall level of preparedness in an urban area or state is influenced by numerous other factors; most importantly, state and local resources. While homeland security grant programs are critical to enabling urban areas and states to enhance preparedness, they represent a small fraction of the tens of billions of dollars spent annually by states and urban areas on public health and safety each year.

Measuring Grant Effectiveness and Preparedness

To measure grant effectiveness and preparedness, states and urban areas must establish their own capability targets and performance measures and metrics based on their unique risk profile and planning assumptions. That risk profile should also determine which capabilities are a priority to address high risk threats and hazards. We cannot measure everything and few parts of the nation need to be fully prepared for every conceivable hazard.

These locally developed targets, measures and metrics should all fit under a common framework such as the Core Capabilities under the National Preparedness Goal. This will ensure a consistent strategic approach while recognizing the differences across a country as large and diverse as the United States.

With these targets, measures and metrics in hand, states and urban areas should engage in a regular assessment process involving self-evaluations, quantitative modeling, and performance evaluations (exercises and especially real world incidents) in order to build a consistent picture of preparedness over time. In each case, the following steps should be addressed:

- Identify gaps in a state or urban area's priority capabilities.
- Outline grant and other expenditures to close the identified capability gaps.
- Based on the measures and metrics, identify the outcomes produced from grant and other expenditures - the closing of capability gaps and the attainment of the capability target.

Throughout such a process, the best way to determine grant effectiveness and overall preparedness is to review how capabilities performed in a real world incident. Based on the need, what were the strengths and what were the gaps when a jurisdiction or agency had to perform? In the end, we are making these investments (federal, state and local) in preparedness to more effectively operate when we have a threat or disaster. That's what matters most.

To date, I have worked on five grant effectiveness studies and have developed tools to evaluate overall preparedness in numerous regions across the nation. These include in the San Francisco Bay Area, San Diego, Hampton Roads, Riverside, and Anaheim/Santa Ana. From that experience I can say with certainty that there is no silver bullet or single answer to addressing the questions of grant effectiveness and overall preparedness.

What I have learned is that grant effectiveness and preparedness cannot be measured by just looking at the United States as a single operating entity, which it is not. Rather, the U.S. is a vast *network* of independent actors - towns, villages, cities, counties, states, the private sector and federal departments and agencies - that must unify to achieve homeland security priorities and perform critical operational tasks before, during, and after an incident.

When attempting to answer how effective a grant program is or how prepared a region or the nation as a whole may be, we must take a varied approach that addresses the question through multiple lenses. These lenses should include a look from the local perspective, the state perspective and the national perspective, and others as well. Taken together, each lens will help provide a more complete understanding as to grant effectiveness and overall preparedness.

Recommendations

1. FEMA should continue to develop high level baseline capability measures, metrics, and resource types under the National Incident Management System (NIMS) across Core Capabilities that urban areas and states can draw from. In some cases, these could be agreed upon minimum requirements for a capability to be functional no matter the location of the country.

2. Continue to have states and urban areas develop their own Core Capability targets, measures and metrics based on local and state level operational plans and state and national standards such as the NIMS, National Fire Protection Association, FBI Bomb Squad accreditation standards, etc. In essence, can the states and urban areas do what their plans and standards say they need to be able to do?

3. Develop a systematic and consistent approach and timeline to conducting risk and capability assessments, follow-on homeland security strategies and investments at the urban area and state levels. To date, timelines for these activities often run concurrently when they should be sequential as each step feeds the next.

4. Ensure that homeland security grant application and reporting materials are designed to capture data needed to track investments on a capabilities basis and provide adequate time to develop those applications.

5. Develop a stand-alone report, or one that serves as an addendum to the National Preparedness Report, that outlines how grant funds have increased capabilities as demonstrated in selected real world incident prevention, protection, response, and recovery operations over the last ten years. Examples may include the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombing, and 2013 Christopher Dorner domestic terrorism rampage in Riverside, and the 2003 and 2007 wildfires in San Diego.

6. Finally, states and urban areas should develop their own grant effectiveness studies using a common framework based on how grant investments impacted their ability to meet Core Capability targets, measures and metrics with an emphasis on how grant funded capabilities impacted real world incident operations. A white paper outlining an approach and methodology is attached hereto.

White Paper

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Homeland Security Grant Dollars

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This white paper outlines the benefits of developing state and urban area homeland security grant effectiveness reports that can demonstrate to policy makers at all levels whether a state or urban area has allocated its funding based upon risk, and what measurable capabilities have been produced through grant investments to mitigate that risk.

Background

Today, many in Congress are demanding that states and urban areas demonstrate the return on investment of homeland security grant programs. To address this demand, states and urban areas must use a systematic and data driven approach that can clearly demonstrate the outcomes produced from grant supported preparedness projects each state and urban area has implemented.

This white paper outlines a methodology to develop Grant Effectiveness Reports for states and urban areas that receive either State Homeland Security Program or Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) funds.[1] Grant effectiveness may be defined as "the expenditure of grant funds that increase or sustain Core Capabilities most needed in order to reduce the risk of terrorism and other catastrophic incidents and implement the National Preparedness Goal."

Grant effectiveness (and overall preparedness) cannot be adequately measured by looking at the United States as a single operating entity, which it is not. Rather, the U.S. is a vast *network* of independent actors - towns, villages, cities, counties, states, the private sector and federal departments and agencies - that must unify to achieve homeland security priorities and perform critical operational tasks before, during, and after an incident.

While mutual aid through systems such as the Emergency Management Assistance Compact allow resources from across the nation to deploy to impacted areas, incidents are still managed by those local and state responders with jurisdictional authority in the impacted area(s). Indeed, all incidents are local even when they may impact the entire nation. As such, regional and state level Grant Effectiveness Reports can provide a detailed and meaningful review of how Core Capabilities within a defined jurisdictional level have improved, been sustained, or decreased over time to manage all hazards as a result of grant funding.

States and urban areas are now required to complete a threat and hazard identification and risk assessment (THIRA), a State Preparedness Report (SPR), and follow-on homeland security strategy update. States and urban areas can leverage these and other existing data sources in order to qualitatively and quantitatively document progress made in building Core Capabilities, reducing risk, and enhancing preparedness. The proposed effort would add to and supplement these existing assessment initiatives.

The objective of the immediate effort is to allow states and urban areas to demonstrate to policy makers at all levels of government, particularly members of Congress with oversight responsibilities, the effectiveness of grant investments while building the foundation for a long-term approach to measuring overall preparedness and risk management.

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[1] This paper and the approach and methodology outlined herein is also applicable to maritime ports and mass transit agencies that receive Port Security Grant Program and Transit Security Grant Program funds.

Approach

The Grant Effectiveness Report would integrate findings from prior risk, capability, and investment data into a broader evaluation of the impact that grant investments have had on state and urban area preparedness. In doing so, the report would directly address the following issues:

- Has the grant program helped the state or urban area better understand and document the threats and hazards that pose a risk to the state or urban area?

- Has the grant program helped the state or urban area better identify, document and prioritize Core Capabilities needed to address high risk threats and hazards?

- Has the grant program helped the state or urban area identify and document its gaps and strengths in those priority Core Capabilities?

- Has the state or urban area invested its grant funds in its priority Core Capabilities?

- How have grant investments improved the state's or urban area's priority Core Capabilities as demonstrated during an incident e.g., terrorism threats or events and natural disasters (real or simulated)?

- What are any remaining gaps in priority Core Capabilities?

- How will cuts in grant funding to the state or urban area impact its level of ability across its priority Core Capabilities?

Methodology

The analysis would begin by compiling relevant data sources from stakeholders, including:

- The State Homeland Security Strategy and Urban Area Homeland Security Strategies.

- Any pre-existing performance targets that may exist, e.g., the Cities Readiness Initiative target of vaccinating metropolitan areas within 48 hours.

- Risk analysis and capabilities assessment data including from the THIRA and the SPR. The analysis would be based on investments made to achieve the capability targets in the THIRA and SPR in furtherance of the state's and urban area's homeland security strategy goals and objectives.

- Financial data from grant reporting processes that track investments.

- Quantitative and qualitative performance data from training, exercises, and real-world incidents.

- Interviews with state and local subject matter experts on key investment areas.

Analysts would then use these different data inputs to identify linkages across risk, capabilities, historical spending, and outcomes. What would follow would be an analysis of correlations between:

- Identified capability gaps in the state or urban area.
- Any identified capability targets the state or urban area has set.
- Historical grant expenditures to close identified capability gaps.
- The outcomes from grant expenditures relative to closing the identified capability gaps.

The chart below presents hypothetical data and the outline in which that data could be presented.

Capability Gaps	Capability Target	Grant Investments	Capability Outcomes
Mass decontamination was limited to cold water through fire houses in parking lots with no personal privacy. Decontamination rate was limited to 100 people per hour.	Mass decontamination rate of 200 people per hour in an enclosed environment with heated water and privacy.	A new mass decontamination unit for a region.	Mass decontamination rate of 200 people per hour in an enclosed environment where the water is heated, there is privacy, and the non-ambulatory can be treated.

Conclusion

At its core, evaluating the effectiveness of grant investments is about measuring the impact that grant supported resources have had on a state or urban area's level of preparedness. The analysis should illustrate the impact of resources dedicated to fill a particular capability gap, the benefits derived from sustaining an existing capability need, any shared or regional benefits that result from the investments, and the consequences of losing capabilities if funding support disappeared. Addressing these issues will form the core of the analytic results, which will help policy-makers at all levels of government (local, state, and federal) better understand the outcomes that are being produced through homeland security grant investments.