

Texas Association of Regional Councils
Bi-Annual Training
02/07/2024

A joint meeting of the TARC Homeland Security Association of Texas and the TARC Criminal Justice Planners Association was held on Wednesday, February 7, 2024, at the Hilton Austin Airport, Bergstrom D.

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM. Attendees in the room introduced themselves, the COG and the program they represented.

Aimee Snoddy, Executive Director for the Public Safety Office, Officer of the Governor, shared the organizational chart and recognized the leadership personnel in each representative branch. Aimee also shared that in FY 2024, approximately 592 million dollars in total funding was administered through the various programs operated through and by the Public Safety Office.

Angie Martin, Director of Grants Administration for the Public Safety Office provided a presentation on contract deliverables, administration vs. review accounts in the eGrants system. She provided an in-depth presentation on potential conflict of interest questions during the prioritization of grant applications. Angie also encouraged users that any notes related to the methodology used in prioritizing grants be placed in the column to the right of the prioritization listings instead of in the notes section at the bottom of the page. The column to the right data is included when reports are generated by the PSO. The notes at the bottom of the page are excluded from the generated reports.

Will Ogletree, Preparedness Program Administrator with the Public Safety Office provided updates for the State Homeland Security Program and Statewide Emergency Radio Infrastructure (SERI) grants. All SHSP applications have a hard deadline of Thursday, February 8, 2024, at 5:00 PM. Each application must both be submitted and certified by the Authorized Official. Will provided in-depth information on project ideas for submission under the three percent national priority areas and the two competitive national priority areas. Will encouraged planners to submit projects that are scalable and flexible. This allows the Public Safety Office to fund projects with DE obligated funds from projects that may be withdrawn. SERI grant applications are currently open and will close at 5:00 PM March 14, 2024. Only state agencies and regional councils of government are eligible to apply for project funding. Approximately 20 million dollars is expected to be available to fund projects for FY2025. The performance period begins September 1, 2024, and will conclude August 31, 2026.

During the first Lunch and Learn session in recent memory, the Texas Office of Homeland Security, represented by Brandon Gentry and Mike George, provided after-action information from the statewide Complex Coordinated Terrorist Attack (CCTA) exercise held in 2023. The planning for the exercise took approximately one year in advance of the exercise. DPS and FBI provided lead planners. Many lessons were learned by participants. One item mentioned was the lack of interoperable communication capability during the exercise.

The "lunch and learn" was enjoyed by the membership.

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HSAT Business Meeting:

Chair Toby Virden called the business meeting to order at 12:32 pm.

Minutes were approved on a motion by Keith Collom, seconded by RJ Thomas.

Dee Harrison provided the Treasurer's report.

Cesar Merla moved to create a select committee to determine how to use Staff Association fees, with RJ Thomas as Chair. Lori Gunn seconded the motion, and it passed. No other workgroup members were decided on.

Stephanie Heffner moved to create a workgroup to study/research the advantages/disadvantages of combining the HSAT/CJPA Staff Associations. Lori Gunn seconded.

Members: Stephanie Heffner-ETCOG

Jesse Henage-CTCOG

Tina Johnson-NTCOG

Madeline McGallion-HGAC

Corina Trevino-CAPCOG

Marisa Quintanilla-RGCOG

Lori Gunn—PRPC

Candi Marcott-WCTCOG

Irene Lawrence-WCTCOG

The meeting adjourned at 12:55

Justice Programs Updates

Alyssa Smith, Federal Justice Programs Administrator and Rob Cottle, Deputy Director, Homeland Security and Justice Programs, provided information on justice programs and the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant. COGs are not eligible to apply for SLCG per legislative mandate.

OOG Child Sex Trafficking Team FY-2025

Hiliary England and Don Stout from the Victim's Services Administration discussed funding opportunities and match requirements for VOWA grant applications.

Regional Roundtable

Kelly Schmidt, North Central Texas COG CJ

Kaylan Arendale, Southeast Texas Regional Planning Commission HS & CJ

Toby Virden, West Central Texas Council of Governments HS

Kelly shared methods of navigating huge funding changes in the criminal justice grants and approaches for success by North Central Texas COG. Kaylan provided insight on how Southeast Texas Regional Planning Commission is addressing changes in funding and ideas going forward. Toby provided suggestions for regions to ensure that grant

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fund monies are not left behind. West Central Texas COG has received grant funding for updating the region's Hazard Mitigation Plans through both TDEM/FEMA and through the Texas General Land Office. Planners are encouraged to find something they are good at and that is needed by the region, build a project for it, and deliver those services to the region to strengthen the respective Homeland Security and Criminal Justice Departments. Audience participation was excellent and good feedback was received.

The final program of the day was provided by Ryan Burns, Cybersecurity Manager with the Texas Intergovernmental Risk Pool. The program, titled "Must Haves for Your Cybersecurity Incident Response Plans," provided information related to past cyber incidents reported by member entities. Ninety percent of all cyber incidents begin with phishing schemes.

New acronym: PICNIC-Problem in Chair, not in computer
Ryan also shared three pillars of cybersecurity: people process, and technology in relation to a three-legged stool. If one falls off, the other two legs won't hold up the stool. Ryan stressed the need for cyber incident response plans for all governmental entities.

The afternoon concluded with the Criminal Justice Planners Association business meeting.

TARC Criminal Justice Planner's Association Meeting Minutes
Treasurer Irene Lawrence called the meeting to order at 4:28.

Due to the prior Chair leaving CVCOG and resigning and the Vice-Chair resigning, officer elections were needed.

Nominations were held and voted on. However, proper parliamentary procedures were not followed; therefore, a nomination committee will be convened, and elections will be held in September 2024.

Adjourn 5:08