

**Technical Assistance Conference Call Meeting Notes**  
**Postal Model for Medical Countermeasures Delivery and Distribution**  
Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) # EP-PMC-11-001 (January 28, 2011)

Wednesday, February 16, 2011  
1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
HHH Building, Suite 638 G, Room # 33B

This Technical Assistance call was hosted by ASPR's USPS Biological Countermeasures Dispensing Program Office to review the FOA referenced above ("Postal Plan Grant") and discuss the application process and requirements. It offered potential applicants a forum for questions and answers, and Technical Assistants from the pertinent Offices were brought together to provide subject matter expertise. The audience was comprised of representatives from eligible entities from various states around the country who joined via telecom.

**Host:**

Delaine Black, Manager, USPS Biological Countermeasures Dispensing Program

**Technical Assistants from ASPR's Grants Management Office:**

Jennifer Richards  
Jennifer Hannah

**Technical Assistants from USPS Medical Countermeasure Program (via telecon)**

Jude Plessas  
Dr. William Raub

**Technical Assistants from CDC Cities Readiness Initiative (CRI) (via telecon)**

Barbara Cooper  
Glenroy Christie

**Audience questions**

1. **Does the level of preliminary planning matter in making award decisions, i.e., do more mature entities that have a prior involvement have an advantage?**

**Jude Plessas**

While any prior work done is helpful and should be highlighted, all applications still have to go through the normal grants review protocol; and prior involvement is not something that the review panel will focus on. The award is being evaluated on the basis of the application. Even the three proof-of-concept drill cities—Seattle, Boston, and Philadelphia - will still have to meet the milestones for Phase I if they are awarded this grant. Outside the pilot sites, Minneapolis and Louisville, there are no other cities anywhere in the country that are any further along with the Postal Plan.

**Dr. Raub**

It is advisable to take a broader view of municipal preparedness rather than just the Postal Plan - preparedness maturity is an advantage. The first review criterion listed talks about this specifically. The more the municipality has invested in preparedness and preparedness planning, the greater the advantage.

**2. Is this grant limited to one per state or is it open to any number of cities?**

**Jennifer Richards**

Eligibility is open to all entities, as many as wish to apply at the state and local level and a host of other entities as detailed in Section 3 of the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA).

**3. What is the Grant number?**

**Delaine Black**

The grant number is EP-PMC-11-001—Postal Model for Medical Countermeasures Delivery and Distribution.

**4. Were any arrangements made with regional Postal Offices? If so, do you have a list of contact people?**

**Jude Plessas**

No local arrangements have been made as far as the Postal Model is concerned. Once the awards have been made, Postal Headquarters would have a Postal Plan Coordinator cover that District, assigned out of our management staff from that District. From that point on, we'll be working with District management and the local carrier union Branches - "boots on the ground" - moving the planning process along to take a locality to a recognized strategic security plan, the first milestone for Phase I; then, to the development of the comprehensive, venue-specific Postal Plan, the second milestone, and; ultimately to the Tabletop Exercise of that plan, the third milestone. All work regarding the Postal Model will still be run through the Program Office at Postal Service Headquarters. It is worth mentioning that there this is a joint effort with HHS/ASPR under the auspices of a Memorandum of Understanding which created a Joint Enterprise between the two agencies.

**5. Is this grant process open to rural districts, outside of a city's jurisdiction? It will be difficult for some of our cities in the CRI to engage, given Postal Plan restrictions like not delivering to apartment complexes in certain ZIP Codes. Would you consider a rural jurisdiction for the grant, since it might be a better option for our rural communities?**

**Jude Plessas**

We kept the eligibility pretty broad, and an entity certainly does not have to fall into a CRI jurisdiction. However, threat feasibility is naturally a factor in the evaluation. The review process will consider the area served and the population size. That footprint must have some

likelihood of being a potential target, too but there is no restriction on a rural entity. And it is inaccurate that apartment complexes wouldn't be covered under a Postal Plan.

**Jennifer Richards**

The eligibility is wide open, but there are screening and responsiveness criteria cited in Section 3; if these are not met, the application will not move forward in the review process. Please take these criteria into consideration as you make your decision to apply.

**6. Are we still considering Anthrax as the likely attack scenario?**

**Jude Plessas**

Primary threat consideration is Anthrax, per the Executive Order that directed the establishment of the National Postal Model.

**7. In our state (New York), it is difficult to deal with the security concerns in the cities. We would need a large security force to implement these plans, whereas in a rural community, it would be easier. Our other concern is that you wouldn't deliver to apartment complexes in the cities.**

**Jude Plessas**

That is not accurate. We will deliver to every residential address within the selected ZIP Codes. What we will not do is to deliver to a specified demographic group with separate address listings not maintained by the Postal Service. Upon activation, we pull the medication from State RSS sites and deliver it to every residential address in public health specified ZIP Codes; that includes apartment complexes and more. It does not include Post Office Boxes, because at the time of activation that Post Office would be closed and under perimeter security; no one is allowed to enter that Post Office except the Postal Plan volunteers and their security escorts.

**8. We have a number of areas that cross jurisdictional lines in a given county, and one Post Office delivers to all of them. Would you be limited to delivering within the jurisdiction or also deliver to all?**

**Jude Plessas**

We would deliver to the entirety of all the ZIP Codes selected for activation, provided we don't have operational constraints such as insufficient resources. Jurisdictions with overlapping ZIP Codes should make a determination during planning whether to include such ZIP codes or not in the greater Postal Plan footprint. From our perspective, we are prepared to deliver to the entirety of the ZIP Codes which public health activates.

**9. We have a few towns that are 100% P O Box. Is there any other mechanism within the Postal Plan to get these meds into the P O Boxes?**

**Jude Plessas**

Since these PO Boxes will be locked down and there will be no public access during activation, we will not deliver to PO Boxes. That is part of our CONOPS, and we don't have

a means to take care of these residents through the Postal Plan. We would look to public health messaging to inform them about alternate venues, just as we would rely on for persons who are allergic to doxycycline, the primary or perhaps only meds a Postal Plan will likely deliver. A Postal Plan is not the silver bullet; it is there to supplement public health distribution networks. This is one example of the importance of existing preparedness plans for a jurisdiction that Dr. Raub referred to earlier.

**10. What time frame does the grant allow to accomplish the goals?**

**Jennifer Richards**

This award will have a one year budget and project period. The estimated start date is June 1, 2011, which is somewhat flexible.

**11. Is the flexibility on your side or ours? Could we choose to start in August?**

**Jennifer Richards**

The flexibility is on the federal government's side. Once the grant is awarded, your project starts on the award issuance date.

**12. If we are not able to accomplish everything in the time period allowed, is there a possibility for an extension?**

**Jennifer Richards**

Yes there is a possibility of up to a 12 month no cost extension.

**13. In those jurisdictions that have begun the planning process, has the State been the primary law enforcement agency?**

**Jude Plessas**

In our pilot city, Minneapolis / St. Paul, we worked with Minnesota State Patrol as well as the Minneapolis Police Department and St Paul Police Department. The State Patrol has taken the lead in the planning for security.

**14. Has the State Authority signed off on that commitment letter stated in Phase I?**

**Minnesota Representative**

All of the authorities—State Highway Patrol and PDs - signed an Agreement.

**Louisville Representative**

Under our Plan, the State only provides security for the RSS sites; the delivery security is covered by local City Police.

**15. How are you going to deal with a single entity within an MSA who applies for the grant, while the rest of the MSA does not?**

**Jude Plessas**

Any entity can apply; an individual county health department is eligible.

**Jennifer Richards**

This is true; but do consider the responsiveness criteria to make sure the application will pass the screening.

**16. Question about the term "venue". Is there any specific definition?**

**Jude Plessas**

The term was used to differentiate the Postal Model from the Postal Plan. The model is the framework upon which an individual plan is created, but the individual plan would be tailored to the needs and idiosyncrasies of the particular jurisdiction or specific venue.

**17. If a county applies and is not awarded this grant, is the county essentially put on hold with regard to the Postal Plan?**

**Jude Plessas**

Through this grant, we have a disciplined means for deployment which we can afford. Under CRI, we had a lot of interest around the country. While we provided subject matter experts to present the CONOPS at briefings all over the country, we did not actually get plans off the ground, in terms of getting volunteers, security, etc., outside of the pilot sites. What is not understood is the huge investment in resources it takes to implement an effort like this and to provide this “in kind” capability to public health. This grant allows us to support deployment in a more formalized way through a cooperative joint effort. Right now, this grant process is the only mechanism we have to deploy this capability in a sustainable fashion.

**18. Is this grant program going to be newly funded on an annual basis?**

**Jude Plessas**

That will depend upon the level of interest generated and funding availability.

**19. Is the March 18 due date firm?**

**Jennifer Richards**

Yes, it is.

**20. When is the Letter of Intent due?**

**Jennifer Hannah**

The letter of intent is due on February 25, and the full application is due on March 18.

**21. Is the Letter of Intent a requirement?**

**Jennifer Richards**

No. It is not a requirement. We encourage you to submit one, but you may still apply if you have not submitted a Letter of Intent.

**22. Could you elaborate on "sustainability?"**

**Jude Plessas**

In terms of the Postal Service, once we establish a plan in a locality, as long as there are monies available to continue the program, we will maintain the volunteer rosters, command center and delivery unit readiness, and the interagency relationships necessary for effective Postal Plans in those localities.

**23. Is it accurate that you only deliver one unit of use per address? Most of our jurisdictions have a Head of Household Policy where they know the average size of a household, say 3 units of use per household.**

**Jude Plessas**

Per the Postal Model, the amount to be delivered is a uniform quantity. The amount depends on the specific Postal Plan for that locality, determined in concert with CDC. CDC DSNS needs to understand the quantities to be requested for the entire response, not just for Postal delivery, and assess any logistical issues that could arise such as transport, etc. Postal Plan logistics is easy enough; we'd look at what it takes for us to move 3 bottles versus one, how often is restocking needed, etc.

**24. The FOA states "for delivery from the national stockpiles". Would you be willing to deliver from our local stockpiles?**

**Jude Plessas**

Currently, Postal Plan MCM comes from the SNS. That is the way the Model is set up since the assumption is that municipal assets would be depleted. It is because the municipality is overwhelmed that we get the request for federal assistance. The request for Postal Plan activation is dovetailed to the request for SNS assets.

**25. What would it take to allow our existing stockpiles to be used up first to avoid transport delays, etc.?**

**Jude Plessas**

The Model was not set up to deliver local stockpiles. Technically, it could be done, of course, but the Model currently isn't set up to do that. The plan is to supplement.

**26. Does the grant program support anything beyond the Tabletop Exercise, like full-scale testing or even activation if something happened?**

**Delaine Black**

If there were an emergency, it would be no different from any other disaster response through ESF 8.

**27. Are the volunteers being reimbursed for their time? There have been rumors that the security forces were reimbursed for their time and the Postal volunteers were not.**

**Jude Plessas**

Of course it is not true. Our volunteers are and will be reimbursed for their time.

**28. Does the Model call for the Postal volunteers to go to the RSS to pull medications? That is contrary to the policy of restricting access to the RSS as much as possible.**

**Delaine Black**

It is important to remember that the Postal Model is just that—a model. It is a framework that gives guidance and some parameters for the planning process. It is not intended to be so restrictive as to prevent adaptation by the local jurisdiction.

**29. How restrictive is the Postal Plan?**

**Jude Plessas**

As you work your way through the model, you will see the flexibility. Those items listed as requirements are requirements, such as the security escorts and perimeter security. They are not negotiable. Beyond that, the planning at the detail level will be up to the specific needs of the jurisdiction.

**30. Will we still be able to request help from the Postal Service if we choose not to apply for this grant or do not win an award?**

**Jude Plessas**

Postal HQ support is happy to hold a telecon to brief any jurisdiction and discuss the Postal Model. That will serve to help provide an education as to the Model so you can be better prepared to apply or reapply in the future. Such support will not provide meaningful help in terms of detailed planning.

**Glen Christie**

As far as the technical assistance we provide, please note that we will continue to help with understanding the requirements; whether you are approved to move forward under the Model or not, we can keep you updated. We can also provide you with information about what you need to do to prepare if you are considering reapplying next year.