COPS Office Anti-Heroin Task Force (AHTF) Program—How Decisions were Made to Allocate Approximately $5.7 Million When More than $20 Million was Requested

The COPS Office received applications from 19 eligible state law enforcement agencies requesting $20,127,953 in federal funding for the FY 2016 COPS Office Anti-Heroin Task Force (AHTF) program.

The COPS Office developed an application to meet the requirements of the law

This is the second fiscal year that the COPS Office has received funding for AHTF. As in the previous fiscal year, AHTF focuses on advancing public safety by providing funds to investigate illicit activities related to the distribution of heroin or unlawful distribution of prescriptive opioids or unlawful heroin and prescription opioid traffickers through statewide collaboration. Only state law enforcement agencies authorized by law or by a state agency to engage in or supervise anti-heroin investigative activities were eligible to apply for funding.

The COPS Office balanced scoring indicators

To measure and compare the necessary scoring indicators, the COPS Office consulted with experts in the fields of policing, criminology, and drug control policy to develop appropriate application questions. Applicants were asked to submit information regarding their jurisdiction's heroin problem on such indicators as

- reported primary treatment admission rates for heroin and other opioids for the previous three years;
- current anti-heroin investigative activities;
- planned or current involvement in an anti-heroin task force.

The community policing philosophy engages in a proactive and systematic examination of identified problems that can be countered with effective responses. Community policing relies heavily on partnerships and relationships between law enforcement and the community it serves. Narrative questions were designed to examine an agency's formation of collaborations with federal, state, local, or tribal partners such as other law enforcement and public agencies, private organizations, or participation in multijurisdictional task forces. Agencies were asked to identify and describe the types of partnerships they intended to initiate or enhance in order to address their identified heroin problem.

The COPS Office verified the data that was submitted

The application system contains numerous built-in logic checks to help prevent the submission of erroneous data. In addition, once the applications were submitted, specialists in the COPS Office immediately reviewed the data contained therein. The COPS Office verified information provided in applications using data from the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). This data verification process was crucial to ensuring that all applicants were properly evaluated based on accurately and consistently reported primary treatment admissions data.

The COPS Office developed a uniform system of evaluating the information that applicants submitted

Comprehensive Review

The 19 eligible applications underwent a comprehensive review process by specialists and external heroin and other opioid subject matter expert (SME) peer reviewers.

The SME peer reviewers evaluated the following criteria in the Project Narrative and Budget Narrative sections of the application to determine the quality of each application. The reviewers looked at the following:

- Problem identification
- Current heroin and other opioid investigative activities
- Anti-heroin task force participation
- Collaboration and partnerships
- High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area threat assessment with regard to heroin and other opioids
- Strategy to achieve program goals
- Applicable and allowable budget items requested

The SME peer reviewers then developed recommendations based on a rating of "Highly Recommended," "Recommended," or "Not Recommended" for each proposal. From the recommendations, seven agencies ranked within the "Highly Recommended" rating, and three agencies ranked within the "Recommended" rating; five agencies were ranked within the "Not Recommended" rating.

Data Scoring

The focus for funding was on state-level law enforcement agencies in states with high rates of identified heroin and other opioid problems in the most recent available data, as indicated through the following sources of state-wide data:

- Primary treatment admissions rates (per 100,000 population) for heroin
- Primary treatment admissions rates (per 100,000 population) for other opioids

A methodology for primary treatment admission rates for heroin and other opioids was established to analyze and rank the admissions data provided in each application (and verified through ONDCP). A median, using the data for the states in which applications were received, was determined using the per capita rate of the state's primary treatment admission data for heroin and other opioids. Applications were then ranked using the following criteria:

1. Applications that received a "Highly Recommended" rating, and had a per capita primary treatment admissions rate for heroin and other opioids at or above the median per capita rate for all applicants meeting the basic minimum requirements.
2. Applicants that received a "Recommended" rating, and had a per capita primary treatment admissions rate for heroin and other opioids at or above the median per capita rate for all applicants meeting the basic minimum requirements.
3. Applicants that received a "Highly Recommended" rating, and had a per capita primary treatment admissions rate for heroin and other opioids below the median per capita rate for all applicants meeting the basic minimum requirements.
4. Applicants that received a "Recommended" rating, and had a per capita primary treatment admissions rate for heroin and other opioids below the median per capita rate for all applicants meeting the basic minimum requirements.