



Contact: [Will Ware](#), Policy Analyst
Homeland Security and Technology Division
202/624-5311
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2008 State Homeland Security Directors Surveyⁱ

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2008 State Homeland Security Directors Survey provides an overview of the fifth annual survey of the 56 state and territorial homeland security directors. In addition to providing details of the state governance structures and homeland security priorities, this report presents an update of the state-federal homeland security partnership and examines states' recent experience with federal grant programs.

In 2008, state homeland security priorities remained fairly consistent with previous years. The top five priorities as listed by state homeland security directors are:

- Coordinating the efforts of state and local agencies;
- Developing interoperable communications for emergency responders;
- Identifying and protecting critical infrastructure;
- Developing a state intelligence fusion center; and
- Strengthening citizen preparedness.

The survey also revealed that:

- More than 75 percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with their communication with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This is a significant increase compared to the 42 percent satisfaction rate reported in 2007;
- According to respondents, the quality of communication from DHS is improving;
- States overwhelmingly use materials from the federal government's Ready Campaign for their own citizen preparedness programs;
- Developing interoperable communications is the primary issue for which survey respondents most need federal assistance—in the form of funding and guidance;
- Survey respondents use their fusion centers as the primary method for sharing information with DHS;
- State interoperable communications structures are significantly in better shape when compared to 2007;
- All respondents either have or are in the process of coordinating their homeland security plans with those of privately owned critical infrastructure; and
- More than 80 percent of respondents have determined the homeland security roles and responsibilities for their National Guard personnel.

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As state homeland security structures continue to mature and capabilities are built, the priorities and goals continue to be refined. During the past five years, states have adjusted their governance structures and priorities to meet changing threats and better align federal grant program requirements.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2004, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) has tracked the progress of state homeland security offices and departments through an annual survey of state homeland security officials. During the past five years, the survey has revealed key elements of states' homeland security governance structures, strategies, and top priorities. The survey also has monitored the communication, coordination, and overall relationship between the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the states.

As in previous years, the survey targeted the Governors Homeland Security Advisors Council (GHSAC), which is comprised of the top homeland security directors as designated by each governor in all states, territories, and the District of Columbia. The survey included questions related to organizational structures, state priorities, interstate relations, federal grant programs, and other salient issues. Forty-three homeland security directors, or approximately 80 percent of the GHSAC, responded to the survey in whole or in part.

As DHS undergoes the first administrative transition of its relatively short history, the 2008 survey provides a useful overview of the homeland security landscape at the state level, both in terms of how states have structured themselves for their homeland security missions and in the issues and challenges that dominate their agendas. Just as important, the 2008 survey offers a clear assessment of the DHS-state relationship: what's working, what's not, and how that relationship can be improved. Finally, the survey touches on the question of funding, revealing state attitudes about how federal grant dollars should be targeted to best improve the security and preparedness of the states and the nation as a whole.

Governance: Structure Indicates Authority

In recent years, all levels of government have made significant strides in improving their preparedness and promoting the overall security of the nation. At the same time, homeland security structures have matured as states have modified their missions and refined their priorities to respond to the ever-changing security threats.

About the 2008 Survey

This is the fifth annual State Homeland Security Directors Survey. The NGA Center for Best Practices has tracked the progress of state homeland security offices since 2004.

The senior homeland security official in all 56 states, territories, and the District of Columbia were polled in the survey.

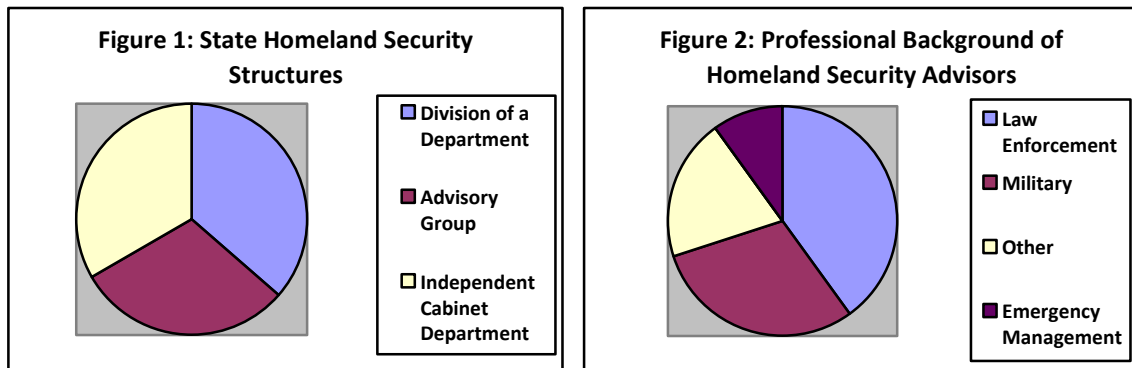
Approximately 80 percent, or 43 state directors, completed the survey in whole or in part. This is a slight decline from the 44 who participated in 2007.

The survey included questions on organizational structures, state strategies, interstate relations, federal grant programs, the role of the private sector, and other salient issues.

States manage homeland security operations through a variety of structures that meet their own unique challenges and priorities. Slightly less than half the survey respondents (46 percent) reported that the state's homeland security operations are overseen by a cabinet-level secretary who reports directly to the governor.

More than one-third of respondents (34 percent) reported having a dual role. These individuals oversee state homeland security operations as well as another state office such as a law enforcement agency, emergency management agency, or the state National Guard.

Survey respondents reported having adopted three primary categories of governance structures to oversee state homeland security operations: an independent cabinet department (28 percent); an advisory group that coordinates budgetary and strategic decisions (25 percent); and a division or segment of a larger cabinet-level department (30 percent). This marks a small shift from previous years because several states recently have restructured their homeland security operations under a larger cabinet-level department. This move is part of an effort by governors to improve efficiency, oversee grant administration, and initiate intrastate coordination efforts.



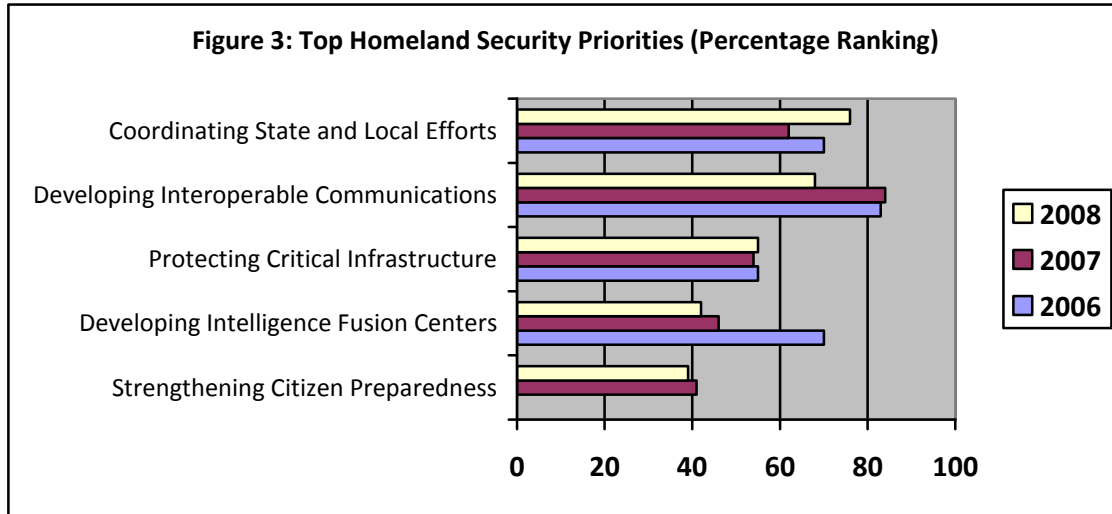
Approximately 40 percent of survey respondents defined their professional background as purely law enforcement, while one-third cite a military background, and 10 percent reported having an emergency management background. The remaining 20 percent cited a variety of backgrounds including former federal prosecutors, state elected officials, and a combination of other professional experiences.

STATE PRIORITIES REMAIN CONSISTENT

State homeland security priorities have remained stable during the past several years. For 2008, the top five homeland security priorities as listed by survey respondents are:

- Coordinating the efforts of state and local agencies;
- Developing interoperable communications for emergency responders;
- Identifying and protecting critical infrastructure;
- Developing a state intelligence fusion center; and
- Strengthening citizen preparedness.

These five issues were the same top priorities cited by state homeland security advisors in 2007; only the first and second priorities, developing interoperable communications and coordinating state and local agencies, were reversed.



Of the above priorities, survey respondents identified developing interoperable communications as the priority in which states most need federal assistance—in the form of both funding and guidance. Developing a state intelligence fusion center and coordinating efforts of state and local agencies also were among the areas in which states reported a significant need for federal assistance.

Coordinating State and Local Efforts: A Challenging Endeavor

Coordinating state and local efforts, for the first time, was cited as the top priority by survey respondents. This is the cornerstone of all homeland security operations as officials strive to achieve a collective effort to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from manmade and natural disasters.

As states work to promote interagency and intergovernmental coordination, the involvement of local agencies, tribal partners, and neighboring states becomes a critical endeavor. Almost every respondent declared that their state government has either a “fair” or “significant” amount of local involvement during the development of the state’s homeland security strategic plan. The same is true during the process for the planning and funding of programs supported by federal grants.

Additionally, according to respondents, every state with a tribal government within its borders has invited the tribal government(s) to participate in the state’s strategic planning and grant processes, and 80 percent of these states work with their tribal governments on a regular basis.

States also have been coordinating plans internally based on specific scenarios. Every respondent reported having developed or being in the process of developing response plans for incident coordination between state and local responders for bioterrorism, chemical incidents, and pandemic or natural disease outbreaks. Of these, almost two-thirds have completed their pandemic or disease outbreak plans while more than half have completed chemical incident plans. Less than half have completed bioterrorism plans.

State homeland directors have been working with neighboring states to coordinate preventative measures and exchange information with agencies beyond their borders. The majority of respondents reported having coordinated or being in the process of coordinating various preventative measures with neighboring states. Chief among the issues being coordinated are public health infrastructure (69 percent), emergency services (67 percent), port security (61 percent), agriculture security (61 percent), and nuclear facility security (58 percent).

Interoperable Communications: Making Headway

For the first time since 2005, developing an interoperable communications capability was not reported as the top priority for state homeland security directors. This shift likely is related to the statewide communications plans and investment justifications required as part of the 2007 Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) grant program.

In general, state interoperable communications structures are in better shape than last year. State and local agencies invested extensive time and effort to generate these plans by the December 3, 2007, deadline established by the PSIC grant program. As a result, approximately 78 percent of respondents reported having a better interoperable communications structure than the previous year. Additionally, only 22 percent of respondents said their structure was the same, and not a single respondent said the structure was worse than in 2007.

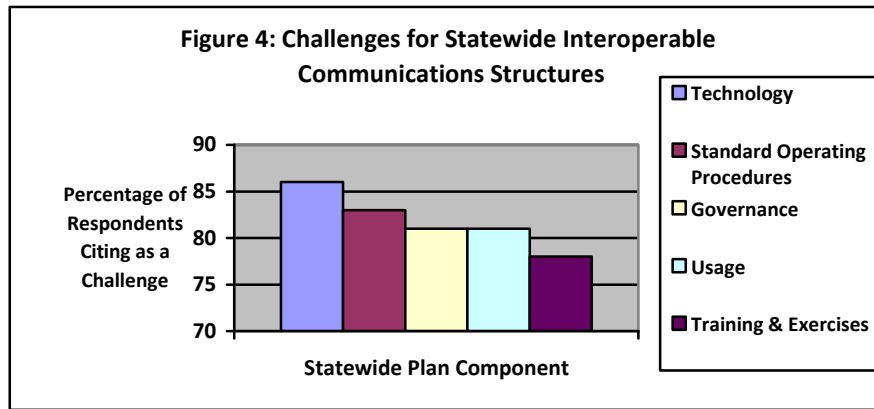
Mounting Responsibilities for the National Guard

The state National Guard frequently responds to a variety of homeland security operations across the country. In recent years, National Guard personnel and resources have been depleted because of overseas deployment or because of increased domestic roles and responsibilities, such as Operation Stonegarden. More than 80 percent of states have determined the homeland security roles and responsibilities for their National Guard personnel. However, the extent to which National Guard personnel are available to respond to natural or manmade disasters seems to vary widely from state to state.

As of August 2008, when this survey was conducted, about two-thirds, or 67 percent, of survey respondents reported that 75 percent of their National Guard personnel were currently available for disaster response. Additionally, about one-third, or 31 percent, reported having less than 50 percent of their National Guard available for natural or manmade disaster response.

The numbers reflect the individual situation in each state and overseas deployment schedules at the time of the survey and therefore provide a “snapshot” of National Guard availability in the states during the summer of 2008.

However, challenges remain before states' communication structures are truly interoperable. According to respondents, the most challenging components of the statewide interoperable communications plans—which now must be implemented—are technology (86 percent), standard operating procedures (83 percent), governance (81 percent), regularity of usage (81 percent), and training and exercises (78 percent).ⁱⁱ



Critical Infrastructure Protection: Improving Coordination

Critical infrastructure protection continues to rank very highly among state priorities. In recent years, significant progress has been achieved in this area. Every survey respondent either has coordinated, or is in the process of coordinating, the state homeland security plan with that of privately owned critical infrastructure. Specifically, 60 percent of respondents have coordinated their plans and 40 percent are in the process of coordinating their plans with the private sector.

Fusion Center Development: Funding is Paramount

The development and sustainability of intelligence fusion centers continue to be significant concerns for state homeland security officials. One of the primary challenges is the sustainability of fusion center operations without federal funding. Only one-quarter of respondents maintained that they will be able to subsidize their fusion center operations without federal funding.

Fusion centers are particularly important in the federal-state communication and coordination effort because more than 60 percent of respondents use their fusion center as the primary method for sharing intelligence with DHS. Comparatively, only 17 percent of states use the DHS National Operations Center to share intelligence, and only 11 percent use local Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) or Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents to share information with the federal government. Additionally, three-quarters of respondents actively and regularly engage with their state fusion center, while 17 percent only engage their fusion center intermittently or when there are emergencies.

While funding appears to be a challenge for fusion centers, operating and meeting federal guidelines does not appear to be problematic. According to respondents, more than 80 percent of

ⁱⁱ A U.S. Department of Homeland Security guidance document lists these five elements as criteria needed for achieving a fully interoperable communications capability. Regularity of usage refers to the frequency in which the technology is used by the emergency practitioner so that its components and functions become inherent to the user when used during a disaster.

state fusion centers comply with the guidelines developed by the Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative.

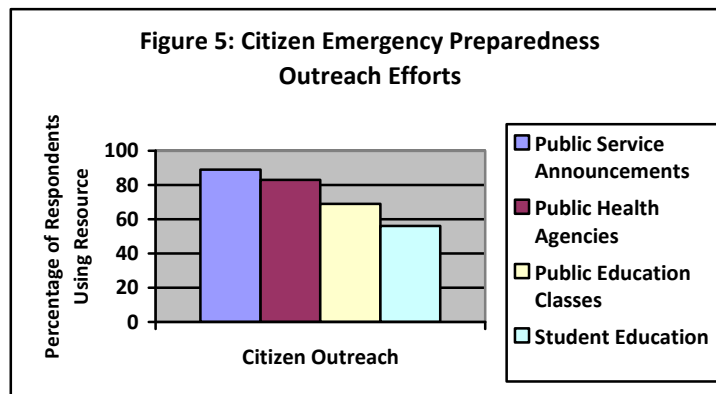
States also demonstrated increased satisfaction with information received from DHS. A majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with the timeliness (53 percent) and specificity (53 percent) of intelligence received from DHS, while 47 percent of respondents are satisfied with the actionability of intelligence from DHS. In addition, approximately 80 percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with the terrorism-related information received from the federal government for operational purposes.

Strengthen Citizen Preparedness: Better Education with Federal Help

States have been strengthening citizen preparedness and emergency response capabilities. They achieve this through outreach, training, educational campaigns, and communication efforts. Approximately two-thirds of all respondents reported having fully implemented some type of emergency preparedness public service campaign, and all but one of the remaining respondents reported that the state is currently developing such a campaign.

Overwhelmingly, states have aligned their public service campaigns with the federal government's Ready Campaign. This alignment encourages citizens to maintain an emergency supply kit, develop an emergency plan, and become informed of the appropriate response to a range of emergencies that are common to their place of residence. Approximately 90 percent of respondents reported using at least some of the Ready Campaign's tools and resources. More specifically, 83 percent of survey participants employ the Ready Campaign's family emergency plan and 75 percent use the emergency supply kit.

States reported utilizing a number of vehicles and agencies to communicate emergency preparedness information to citizens. In particular, 89 percent of respondents reported using public service announcements, 83 percent use public health agencies, 69 percent use public education classes, and 56 percent acknowledged using student education programs.



States also track their citizen outreach using a number of different methods. Approximately 41 percent of respondents tracked their outreach efforts by the number of Web site hits, 30 percent of respondents use surveys, 8 percent use polls, and 8 percent of respondents use Citizen Corps to track the effectiveness of their state's outreach efforts. Slightly more than one-third of survey participants reported that they do not track their outreach efforts.

DHS-STATE RELATIONS: REAL PROGRESS

The relationship between DHS and the states, which began with the department's creation in 2003, was marked in its early stages by a disproportionate number of challenges and hurdles. During the past 12 months, however, significant progress has been made as all parties continue to work on improving coordination. The 2008 survey indicates that DHS has made noticeable strides in communicating information related to its programs and offices and has improved its efforts to coordinate grant programs with state and local governments.

Better Communication and Collaboration

In past years, communications between states and DHS have been erratic. However, in 2008 states reported significant improvement with their communications and overall relationship with the department. Recent strategic improvements by DHS include:

- Enhancing the quality of information sent to states;
- Using appropriate communication channels; and
- Improving the timeliness of communication.

As a result, more than 75 percent of survey respondents expressed satisfaction with DHS communications. This is a considerable improvement compared to the 42 percent satisfaction rate reported in 2007.

More specifically, the quality of communications from DHS has improved during the past year. Approximately 60 percent of survey respondents reported that the quality of communications between their state and DHS during the past 12 months has stayed the same, while one-third reported an improvement. Less than 6 percent reported deterioration in the quality of communications.

Proper communication channels are essential to coordinate the multigovernment and multiagency resources required to secure the nation. Communicating grant program details, threat-based intelligence, and other timely information is crucial. States have reported using a variety of DHS assets in their communications with the department. According to survey respondents, the most frequently used are the Protective Security Advisors (PSAs), the Intergovernmental Programs Office, Government Coordinating Councils, and Sector Coordinating Councils.

Additionally, electronic communication continues to be the overwhelming choice for states. Approximately 83 percent of respondents prefer electronic communication with DHS, followed by telephones and the use of nongovernmental organizations and associations.

DHS provides a variety of valuable information, resources, and services that state homeland security directors can utilize. According to the survey, among the most useful resources available to states are critical infrastructure best practices reports, various intelligence products available via fusion centers, and the National Response Framework (NRF) and other preparedness training tools.

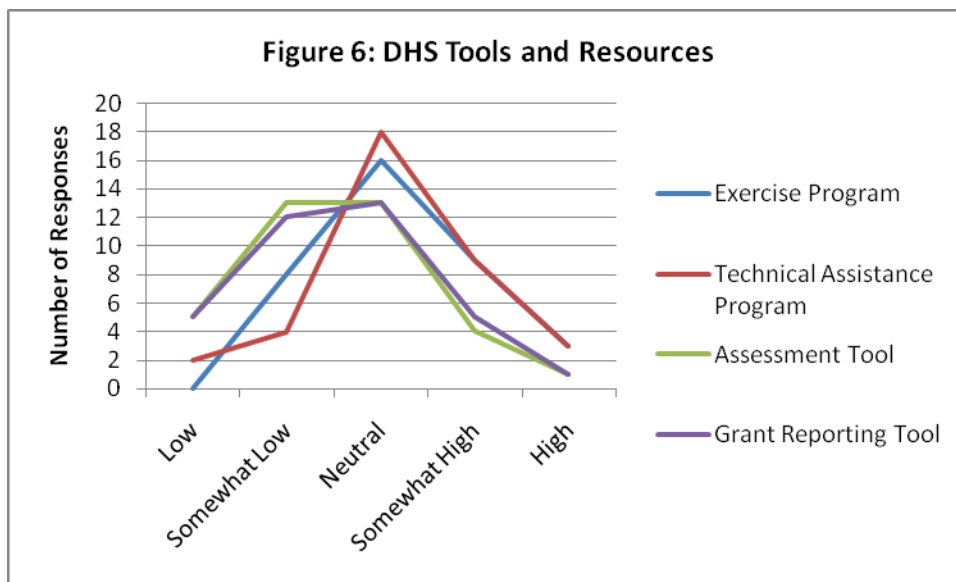
At the same time, survey respondents believe the federal government can further assist states in enhancing their homeland security programs. According to respondents, DHS should place additional emphasis in the following areas:

- Providing additional grant funding (86 percent);

- Coordinating policies with states before their release and implementation (78 percent); and
- Improving coordination with other federal departments (69 percent).

Programs and Offices: Better Tools and Resources

In recent years, states have demonstrated varying levels of satisfaction with the DHS programs and offices. While none of the tools and resources examined can be considered favorable, among the highest rated by survey respondents are the Exercise Program (33 percent) and the Technical Assistance Program (33 percent), followed by the Grant Reporting Tool (17 percent) and the Assessment Tool (14 percent). Respondents also reported a fairly high satisfaction level for the Office of Grants and Training, which received satisfactory marks from 47 percent of survey respondents.



DHS Grant Programs: Mixed Reactions

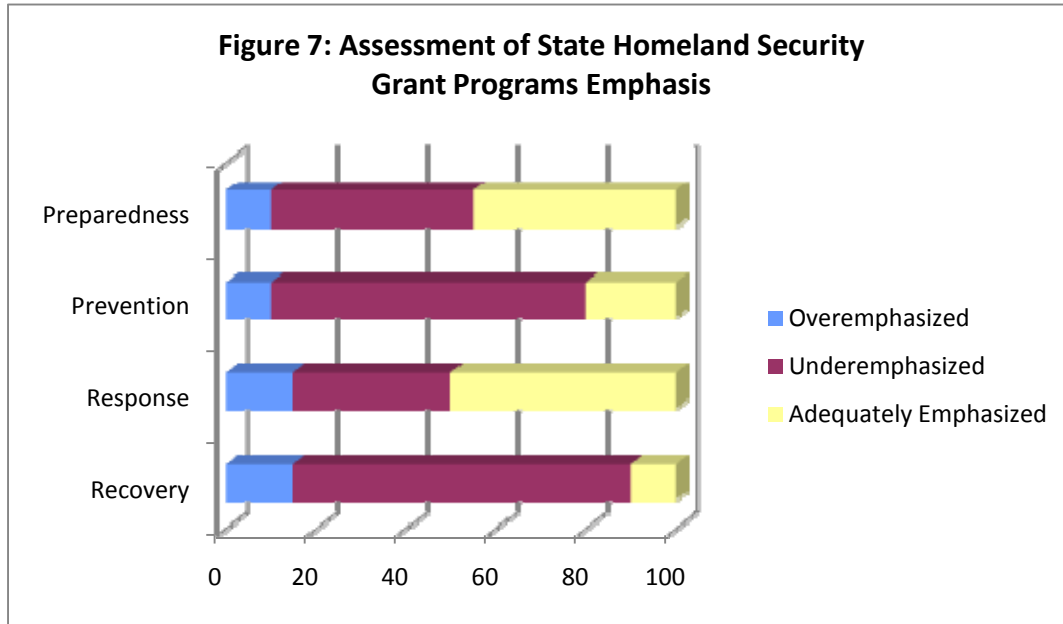
DHS grant programs also have received varying levels of feedback from state homeland security directors. In the 2008 survey, state homeland security directors were asked to rate the adequacy of funding levels for several federal grant programs. Of note, almost three-quarters of respondents reported adequate funding levels for Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program (LETPP) activities, 61 percent for the overall State Homeland Security Grant Program, and 42 percent for the Emergency Management Performance Grant Program.

Survey respondents identified their top challenge related to DHS grants programs as:

- Not enough funding available (36 percent);
- Constant changes in the grant program applications (31 percent); and
- Not enough flexibility on how to spend funds (28 percent).

Approximately 45 percent of survey participants felt that the DHS State Homeland Security Grant Program strikes an appropriate balance among preparedness, prevention, response, and recovery. Figure 7 provides a breakdown of the responses from states that felt an appropriate balance does *not* exist. Overall, state homeland security directors believed there should be an additional

emphasis on prevention and recovery grant programs, but not at the expense of preparedness and response.



There also was some indication that states would like to see a change in emphasis for homeland security grant programs and priorities. Survey respondents believed the top priorities for the incoming secretary of DHS should be improving the process for allocating grants (89 percent), allowing for 5 percent of federal grant funding to be used toward management and administration expenditures (61 percent), improving emergency communications capabilities (61 percent), providing support for intelligence fusion centers (56 percent), and improving information sharing capabilities among all levels of government (56 percent).

CONCLUSION

The 2008 State Homeland Security Directors Survey illustrates the ongoing challenges states face as they work to improve their preparedness and response capabilities. Interoperable communications, protection of critical infrastructure, intelligence and information sharing, and coordination among all levels of government have been among the most pressing issues facing the states since the annual survey began in 2004.

But the 2008 survey also revealed significant progress and improvement in many areas. States are working more closely with local governments and with the private sector to coordinate plans; interoperable communications capabilities, while still a priority issue, are much improved over past years; and, notably, the partnership between the states and the federal government—in particular with the Department of Homeland Security—is stronger than ever before.

As a new Administration takes office, the results of the 2008 survey offer a valuable assessment about what works, what doesn't work, and how homeland security as a national endeavor can be strengthened and improved.