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Office of Inspector General Audit Report Highlights Ways to Strengthen TIGER Grant Oversight

An audit report released last week by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of Inspector General (OIG) found that while USDOT created timely controls for the TIGER grant program, it still could improve and strengthen program oversight.

The audit found "vulnerabilities" in four areas: reviewing and finalizing grant agreements between USDOT and TIGER grantees, monitoring oversight of individual projects, assessing oversight risks, and performance measurement.

Specific examples are cited in the report, such as the fact that one third of grant agreements sampled did not have clear milestones and/or scope of the work, making it hard for OST to hold TIGER grantees accountable for hitting those milestones and achieving desired results. Also, OIG found that 42 of the 53 performance measures sampled were not outcome-based, meaning OST cannot determine if project goals were met.

Among the report's recommendations:

1. Establishment and implementation of a formal process to make sure all grant agreements have a clear schedule, scope, set of milestones, and performance measures.
2. Creation and implementation of a systematic process for documenting major management decisions involving the program and individual TIGER projects.
3. Creation of a methodology to see program outcomes from grantee performance data for each TIGER project.
4. Establishment of a comprehensive methodology to collect performance measures to assess the overall impact of the whole TIGER program.

"Management attention on making such improvements will go a long way in meeting program goals as ARRA-funded (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) TIGER projects are completed and as TIGER II, III, and IV projects get underway," the report states. "By taking action now, the Department will help ensure that the TIGER program will stimulate the economy and make transportation improvements that have a significant impact on the nation, a region, or a metropolitan area."

In conducting the audit, OIG spoke with personnel from the Office of the Secretary of Transportation and Operating Administrations headquarters, reviewed TIGER policies and procedures, and analyzed documents from the program. OIG also conducted site visits to TIGER projects currently under construction.

OIG's 28-page audit is available online at bit.ly/TIGERaudit.

Questions regarding this article may be directed to editor@ashtojournal.org.