AHIDTA County Designation & Assessment Process

The Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) has exclusive authority to make county designation and funding decisions relating to the HIDTA program. A petition for a county HIDTA designation may be submitted by a coalition of law enforcement agencies involved in drug control efforts in that county. Within Appalachia HIDTA (AHIDTA), all petitions must be submitted through the AHIDTA Executive Board. The AHIDTA Committee on Initiative Review and Development will review every petition, then report their recommendation to the Executive Board. The Executive Board will review each petition and vote to either accept or reject the petition. If accepted, the AHIDTA Director will transmit the petition to ONDCP along with a letter from the Chairman of AHIDTA’s Executive Board stating the Board supports the petition. If the petition is rejected by the Board the AHIDTA Director shall prepare a letter to the petitioners informing them that the county’s designation was not endorsed by the Executive Board. To facilitate the Executive Board’s review of proposals for new AHIDTA county designations, the following process shall be followed:

**The Petition**

* Interested law enforcement coalitions must submit a petition for AHIDTA county designation to the appropriate State Coordinator.
* Before submitting a petition, the petitioning law enforcement coalition should consult with the AHIDTA State Coordinator about the content of petitions and the petition process.
* The petition shall identify the member agencies constituting the petitioning law enforcement coalition, operational history of coalition, if any, and a responsible official for each agency.
* Petitions shall include a discussion of the following four elements:
  1. The extent of illegal drug production, manufacturing, importation, or distribution in the county;
  2. The state, local, and tribal law enforcement efforts and resources currently committed to respond to the drug trafficking problem in the county;
  3. The impact of the drug-related activities within the county, the surrounding area, the state, and other areas of the United States; and
  4. The need for increased federal resources to respond adequately to the area’s drug-related activities.
* Petitions should present a detailed evidence-based description of drug-related activity within the county, to include the following information (to the extent it is available):
  + - Demographic information about the county and surrounding area
    - Number of drug arrests, and persons charged, annually
    - Number of non-marijuana drug arrests annually
    - Type and quantity of drugs seized
    - Drug arrests per capita within the county
    - Non-marijuana drug arrests per capita within the county
    - Fatal and non-fatal overdoses per capita within the county
    - Profile of the drug threat in the county
    - Presence of any identifiable drug organizations responsible for drug trafficking such as cartels, gangs, or other associations in the county
* Petitions should describe in detail the strategies to be employed by the law enforcement coalition to address and combat illegal drug activity within the county.
* The petition shall also include a budget, as to the expected cost, if the county is finally designated.
* Once the petition is submitted to an AHIDTA State Coordinator, all members of the Executive Board shall be notified of the submission.

**AHIDTA Staff Review**

* AHIDTA staff shall validate the submitted evidence-based analysis of drug-related activity within the county, to include the following information (to the extent it is available):
  + - Number of drug arrests and persons charged annually
    - Number of non-marijuana drug arrests annually
    - Type and quantity of drugs seized
    - Drug arrests per capita within the county
    - Non-marijuana drug arrests per capita within the county
    - Fatal and non-fatal overdose deaths within the county
    - Profile of the drug threat in the county
    - Presence of any identifiable drug organizations responsible for drug trafficking such as cartels, gangs, or other associations in the county
* AHIDTA staff shall assess the severity of the county drug threat relative to the drug threat in all other counties in the associated federal District, state, and overall region covered by AHIDTA.
* As appropriate, AHIDTA staff shall consult with local, state and federal law enforcement, and prosecutorial agencies to determine whether investigations or prosecutions have generated credible information concerning county links to DTOs.
* AHIDTA staff shall consult with the associated U.S. Attorney, DEA, FBI, ATF and state police agency for any information concerning the strategic importance of the petitioning county to the overall drug control strategy.
* AHIDTA staff shall assess the productivity and reputation of existing law enforcement efforts and personnel currently dedicated to the drug enforcement problem in the county. AHIDTA staff shall assess the likely effectiveness of the strategies described in the proposal to be employed by the law enforcement coalition to address and combat illegal drug activity within the county.
* AHIDTA staff shall assess whether the drug-related activity within the county is responsible for collateral problems such as public corruption or localized health epidemics.
* AHIDTA staff shall project the expenses and likely effect upon AHIDTA’s budget associated with the addition of the proposed county.

**Executive Board Action Following New County Review**

* Upon completion of the AHIDTA staff review, the Committee on Initiative Review and Development shall report to the AHIDTA Executive Board by the second quarterly board meeting, summarizing AHIDTA’s assessments and findings and present a recommendation as to whether the Executive Board should support the new county designation.
* After receiving the assessment and recommendation of the Committee on Initiative Review and Development, the Executive Board shall discuss the merits of the petition, and then vote on whether or not to recommend designation of the petitioning county. The vote shall be determined by simple majority.
* If the Executive Board does not vote to recommend designation of the petitioning county, the AHIDTA Director shall prepare a letter to the petitioners informing them that the county’s designation was not endorsed by the Executive Board.
* If the Executive Board does vote to recommend designation of the petitioning county, the Chairman of the Executive Board shall prepare a letter for inclusion in the packet communicating the Executive Board’s position endorsing the county’s petition.
* For counties endorsed by the Executive Board, the AHIDTA Director shall transmit the county petition to ONDCP together with the Chairman’s letter to the ONDCP Director with the yearly budget submission packet, due June 15 of each year.
* ONDCP will notify the petitioners regarding the final disposition of the request.

**Review of Existing AHIDTA County Designations**

* Annually, AHIDTA staff will assess the continuing need for HIDTA funding of drug control efforts in every AHIDTA county in accordance with HIDTA Policy 3.4.12
* This review shall ensure each county:

1. Complies with HIDTA Program requirements.

2. Effectively implements their proposed strategy.

3. Achieves negotiated performance targets.

4. Is sufficiently productive to warrant continued HIDTA funding.

**Review process**

* Every existing AHIDTA county review shall include an assessment of the current drug threat within the county and a comparison of the current threat in the county with the severity of the drug threat in all other counties within the associated federal District, state, and overall region covered by AHIDTA. In making the assessment, AHIDTA staff shall consider the same information evaluated for a new county petition listed above.
* In evaluating the productivity and performance of an AHIDTA task force, AHIDTA staff shall consider drugs seized, DTO disruption, arrests, prosecutions, federal prosecutions and any other pertinent data available for evaluation. The performance data shall be considered against AHIDTA expenditures for the task force, so as to generate quantifiable metrics reflecting the return on AHIDTA’s investment in the task force. This metric should be compared to the ROI for similarly situated AHIDTA task forces.
* AHIDTA staff shall contact AHIDTA task force leadership to determine whether additional other non-quantifiable considerations concerning the task force work should be considered.
* AHIDTA staff shall assess how withdrawal of AHIDTA designation and funding from the county would likely impact the drug activity in the area and the community generally.
* The Executive Director, or designee of AHIDTA, shall report to the Executive Board, summarizing AHIDTA’s assessments and findings and present a recommendation as to whether the Executive Board should support the county’s continuing AHIDTA designation and funding.
* After receiving the assessment and recommendation of the Executive Director, the Executive Board shall discuss the merits of the county’s continuing AHIDTA designation, then vote on whether or not the county’s designation should continue. The vote shall be determined by simple majority.
* If the Executive Board does not support a county’s continuing AHIDTA designation, the Executive Director shall send a letter to the ONDCP Director recommending withdrawal of the county’s AHIDTA designation.