Pre-Award Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for 2014 COPS Office Hiring Program (CHP)

**Getting Started**

Q: What is the purpose of COPS Office Hiring Program (CHP) funding?

A: CHP is a competitive grant program that provides funding to address the full-time sworn officer needs of state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies nationwide to increase their community policing capacity and crime prevention efforts. 2014 CHP grants provide 75 percent funding for approved entry-level salaries and fringe benefits of newly-hired and/or rehired, full-time sworn career law enforcement officers over three years (36 months) up to a maximum of $125,000 per officer position.

Q: Is CHP an open solicitation?

A: Yes. All local, state, and tribal law enforcement agencies that have primary law enforcement are eligible to apply.

Q: What is my username?

A: In the new COPS Office Agency Portal, your user name would be the log-in E-mail Address you used to set up your account. At that time, you would have also established a 12 character password for logging into the COPS Office Online Account Access site. If you need assistance in accessing the site, you may contact the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.

Q: How does my agency obtain its password if it is lost or forgotten?

A: To obtain your password, click on the "Account Access" link on the COPS Office website. The log-on page has a "Forgot your password?" link that will enable you to have your password e-mailed to the current law enforcement executive on file with the COPS Office.

Q: I do not know my agency's ORI number, how can I obtain it?

A: If you've had grants with the COPS Office before and do not know your ORI number, please contact the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770 and a representative will be able to look up your ORI number.

Q: My agency's Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is about to expire, how do I renew it?

A: All Applicants must have a DUNS number prior to submitting an application for COPS Office funding. A DUNS number is a unique nine or thirteen-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and tracking entities receiving federal funds. If your DUNS number is due to expire on or before September 30, 2014 you should renew it as soon as possible. To verify the expiration date of your DUNS number, please call 866-705-5711 or visit www.dnb.com/us.

Q: My System for Award Management (SAM) registration is about to expire, how do I renew it?

A: All applicants for federal financial assistance must be registered in the SAM database prior to submitting an application for COPS Office funding. The SAM database is the repository for standard information about federal financial assistance applicants, recipients, and sub-recipients. Applicants must maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during the grant application process. If awarded, you must also maintain the currency of your information in the SAM until you submit the final financial report or receive the final payment under this grant, whichever is later. This requires that you review and update your information at least annually after the initial registration, and more frequently if required by changes in your information or another award term. If you have an active SAM registration that is set to expire before September 30, 2014 you must renew your SAM registration before completing the application. To verify the expiration date of your SAM registration, please visit www.sam.gov.

Q: Can I print out a blank CHP application so I can see it on paper first?

A: Yes. The COPS Office website has provided a link to a PDF version of the application for agencies to use for reference only. To access the PDF version of the application, please go to the COPS Office website at www.cops.usdoj.gov and click on the "Grants and Funding" link. Once you access the grants and funding page, click the link for the "COPS Hiring Program" and a copy of the application will be posted there. As a reminder, applications are accepted online via the COPS Office website. The PDF version of the application serves as a reference document only and should not be used to submit your application. Note that not all fields in the printed PDF version of the application are required; the required fields will be specified in the online application.

Q: Is there any way to print the finished application so that I can review a hard copy prior to submission?

A: Yes, before submitting the application on the last page of the online application, you will be able to print a copy for review; you will only be able to print the entire application, or individual sections. After submission, you will also be able to print the entire completed application.

Q: How much time do I have before the application times out?

A: The applications will time out after 20 minutes of non-activity. If your application times out, you will only lose the current page of data. It is advisable to click the save button once you complete each page of the application. This will prevent you from losing data in the event your application is timed out. You will only be able to save pages that are completely filled out.

**Allowable Costs under CHP**

Q: What may my agency request funding for under the CHP grant program?

A: Agencies may request funding to pay for the entry-level salaries and fringe benefits of full-time sworn officers. 2014 CHP grants will provide up to 75 percent funding for approved entry-level salaries and fringe benefits of newly-hired and/or rehired, full-time sworn career law enforcement officers over three years (36 months) up to a maximum of $125,000 per officer position; there is a minimum 25 percent local cash match. CHP funding may be allocated among three hiring categories, to: (a) hire new officer positions, which includes filling existing officer vacancies that are no longer funded in your agency's budget due to state, local, or BIA budget cuts; (b) rehire officers who have already been laid off by any jurisdiction (at the time of application) as a result of state, local, or BIA budget cuts; and/or (c)

rehire officers who are (at the time of application) currently scheduled to be laid off by your jurisdiction on a specific future date as a result of state, local, or BIA budget cuts.

Q: Can CHP grant funding be used to pay for officer overtime and/or eliminate officer furloughs?

A: No. CHP funding may only be used to hire and rehire full-time law enforcement officers in order to increase law enforcement agencies' community policing capacity and crime prevention efforts.

Q: Can CHP funding be used to fill sworn officer positions that are vacant at the time we apply for CHP funding?

A: No. Officers funded with CHP grant funds must be in addition to any officers funded in your agency's local budget. However, CHP funding may be used to fill vacant sworn officer positions if the positions are unfunded in the law enforcement budget (i.e., state, local, or BIA funding has not been budgeted to pay for the salary and benefits costs of the positions) because of a hiring freeze or budget cuts due to local fiscal distress.

Q: How does the COPS Office define a "career law enforcement officer?" Does this include sworn jail/correctional officers?

A: The COPS Office statute defines a "career law enforcement officer" as an officer hired on a permanent basis who is authorized by law or by a state/local public agency to engage in or supervise the prevention, detection, or investigation of criminal law violations. The CHP grant program only funds sworn officer/deputy positions who are first responders to calls for service. Sworn jail/correctional officers are NOT funded through this program.

**Hiring Military Veterans under 2014 CHP**

Q: How do you define a military veteran?

A: Under the FY2014 CHP solicitation, a military veteran is defined as an individual who served on active duty at any time in the armed forces for a period of more than 180 consecutive days, any part of which occurred on or after September 11, 2001 and who has been discharged or released from active duty in the armed forces under honorable conditions.

Q: Are new hire officer positions required to be military veterans under 2014 CHP?

A: No. Under 2014 CHP new hire officer positions are **not** required to be filled by military veterans. However, applicants who commit to hiring or rehiring at least one military veteran (as defined above) will receive additional consideration for 2014 CHP funding. These military veterans may be in **any** of the three hiring categories, not just new hires.

Q: Are there any other areas of additional consideration under 2014 CHP?

A: Yes. Applicants that choose "Homicide/Gun Violence," "School Based Policing through School Resource Officers," "Trust Problems," or "Homeland Security" as their community policing problem area in Section 6B, Question 7 of the application will receive additional consideration for 2014 CHP

funding; however, agencies awarded CHP funding for these problem areas will not be able to change the problem area of their community policing strategies post-award.

Agencies that have experienced an unanticipated catastrophic event or who are in one of the President's designated Promise Zones will receive additional consideration for 2014 CHP funding. All agencies that report that they have experienced an unanticipated catastrophic event will be required to submit an attachment documenting the event or incident as part of their application via Section 13.

**Rehiring Officers under CHP**

*I. Officer Positions Already Laid Off at the Time of Application:*

Q: If my agency receives CHP funding to rehire officers who were already laid off at the time of our application, do we need to maintain documentation in the CHP grant file regarding the lay-offs?

A: Yes. Your agency should keep a record of the date(s) the officers were laid off and the date(s) the positions were rehired with CHP funding in your grant file for future monitoring or audit purposes. Please note that CHP funding is based on your agency's entry-level salary and benefits package and that any additional costs beyond entry-level for rehired officers are the responsibility of your agency.

Q: If my agency is awarded CHP funding to rehire officers who were laid off, when can we rehire those officers?

A: Your agency may rehire the officers on or after the official grant award start date. In addition, your agency should maintain documentation showing the date(s) that the positions were laid off and rehired.

*II. Officer Positions Scheduled to be Laid Off on a Specific Future Date at the Time of Application:*

Q: If my agency receives CHP funding to rehire officers that are scheduled to be laid off on a specific date in the future, do we need to maintain documentation in the CHP grant file regarding the lay-offs?

A: Yes. Your agency must keep documentation in your grant file for future monitoring or audit purposes that shows: (a) the dates of the scheduled lay-off(s); (b) the number of officers scheduled to be laid off; (c) the number of officers rehired with CHP funds; (d) the date of the rehire(s); and (e) the reason(s) for the scheduled lay-off(s) (only lay-offs that will occur for reasons unrelated to the receipt of CHP funds may be rehired with CHP grant funds).

Q: What kind of documentation may be helpful to demonstrate that the lay-off(s) is not related to the receipt of CHP funds?

A: Any records showing that the lay-off(s) occurred as a result of state, local, or BIA budget cuts. To show that the lay-offs did not occur as a direct result of the availability of CHP funds, it is especially helpful to demonstrate that budget cuts occurred in the entire (or at least additional) municipal or tribal governmental departments, not just the law enforcement department—or, if budget cuts occurred only in the law enforcement agency's budget, that they were across all categories, and not just sworn officer

positions. Such documents might include (but are not limited to): (a) council meeting minutes discussing the budget cuts and lay-offs; (b) budget orders directing municipal departments to reduce their operating budgets; (c) personnel directives given to the officers who are scheduled for lay-off(s); (d) any other local documents explaining why the lay-offs occurred; and/or (e) notices provided to the individual officers regarding the date(s) of the lay-offs.

Q: Our agency has applied for CHP funding to rehire officers who are scheduled to be laid off on a specific date in the future. Do we need to actually lay off officers before using COPS funds and then rehire them?

A: Unless required by your jurisdiction, your agency is not required to formally complete the administrative steps associated with the lay-off of the individual officers you are seeking to rehire. As long as your agency can document that a final, approved budget decision, unrelated to the receipt of CHP funding, was made to lay off those particular individual officers on the identified lay-off date(s), it may transfer the officers to the CHP funding on or after the date of the lay-off. However, it must continue to fund the officers with its own funds from the grant award start date until the date of the scheduled lay-off (for example, if the COPS Office award start date is September 1 and the lay-off is scheduled for November 1, then the COPS Office funds may not be used to fund the officers until November 1, the date of the scheduled lay-off).

*III. Post Application Lay-Offs:*

Q: If our agency's economic conditions change after receiving a CHP grant and we want to change the hiring categories from what we identified in our CHP application because of post-application lay-offs, what should our agency do?

A: If your agency receives a CHP grant and after receiving the grant, your agency needs to change the hiring category(s) it received funding under, your agency must request a post-award grant modification and must receive prior approval before spending CHP funding. To be considered for a post-application modification into the rehire post-application lay-off category, an agency must demonstrate that the officers to be rehired were officially laid off post-application or are now officially scheduled for lay-off on a specific future date as the result of financial reasons unrelated to the receipt of COPS Office funding. The COPS Office will only consider a modification request into the rehire category for post-application layoffs after an agency has made final, approved budget and/or personnel decisions. To obtain information on modifying a CHP grant award, please contact the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.

Q: How will the COPS Office monitor my agency's use of CHP funds for rehiring laid-off officers?

A: The COPS Office monitors grantee compliance with all grant requirements in a variety of ways. For example, your agency may receive an on-site monitoring visit from the COPS Office during the grant period, an on-site financial monitoring visit from the Office of Justice Programs, Office of the Chief Financial Officer, or it may be audited by the Office of the Inspector General's Audit Division. Your agency also may be asked to submit written documentation demonstrating its compliance with the grant conditions or in response to evaluations by outside organizations.

Q: How long must we keep copies of all of these records to demonstrate when and why we rehired laid-off officers?

A: Your agency is required to maintain grant records to demonstrate your proper use of grant funds throughout the active grant period and then for at least an additional three years after the grant is officially closed out by the COPS Office.

**Hiring School Resource Officers (SRO) under 2014 CHP**

Q: How do you define a School Resource Officer (SRO)?

A: An SRO is a career law enforcement officer, with sworn authority, deployed in community-oriented policing, and assigned by the employing police department or agency to work in collaboration with schools and community-based organizations to (a) address crime problems, gangs, and drug activities affecting or occurring in or around an elementary or secondary school; (b) to develop or expand crime prevention efforts for students; (c) to educate likely school-age victims in crime prevention and safety; (d) o develop or expand community justice initiatives for students; (e) to train students in conflict resolution, restorative justice, and crime awareness; (f) to assist in the identification of physical changes in the environment that may reduce crime in or around the school; and (g) to assist in developing school policy that addresses crime and to recommend procedural changes.

Q: Are there any restrictions on using CHP grant funds to hire School Resource Officers (SRO)?

A: No. Deploying officers in a School Resource Officer capacity is acceptable under CHP. Note that funding for a School Resource Officer position must be based on your agency's standard salary and benefits for entry level sworn officer positions. If the School Resource Officer position salary and benefits are higher than those for entry-level positions, the difference in dollar amount is the responsibility of the agency.

Q: Can I apply for both SRO positions and non-SRO positions? How do I apply for SROs specifically?

A: If your agency is requesting officer position(s) in order to deploy SROs, then **all** of the grant-funded officer positions must be used to deploy full-time SROs; in order to request officer position(s) to deploy as SROs, you **must** select "School Based Policing through School Resource Officers" under "Child and Youth Safety Problems" as your community policing problem area in Section 6B, Question 7 of the application. If your agency selects this problem area, and is awarded 2014 CHP funding, your agency will not be able to change the problem area of its community policing plan post-award.

Q: Are there any other application requirements if my agency wants to request CHP grant funds to hire SROs?

A: No. However, if your agency is awarded CHP funding to hire SROs, the COPS Office will ask your agency to submit the name(s) and contact information of the school(s) where the SROs will be deployed. Your agency will also be required to submit a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between your agency and the school/school district, defining the roles and responsibilities of the individuals and partners involved, including SROs, school administrators, law enforcement and education departments, students, and parents. The MOU should explicitly state the proposed programs and daily activities that the SRO will develop and/or administer; address the policies/procedures and the extent to which information will be shared between the law enforcement agency and school (or school district) partners;

and the MOU should be signed by the law enforcement executive and designated representative for the school/school district.

Q: I already know the names and contact information for the school partners, and we already have an MOU in place. Can I submit them with my application?

A: You may provide the names and contact information for each school partner in Section 12, "Official Partner(s) Contact Information," of the Application. If you have an MOU already in place, you may upload it to the application in Section 13, "Application Attachment." When attaching files to your COPS Office application, the following file types are acceptable: **standard Doc/Docx, PDF, or xls/xlsx**.

**Preparing Your Application**

Q: For the narrative sections, does the 4,000-character limit include spaces and special characters, or just letters?

A: Yes, the 4,000-character limit includes letters, numbers, spaces, and special characters.

Q: I noticed that the number of officers I am allowed to request has been capped. How was the cap established, and can I still allocate those officers across the three hiring categories?

A: Because of the relatively limited funding available compared to the amount requested, and the desire to distribute funding for officers to a larger number of agencies, the COPS Office has imposed caps on the total number of officer positions that could be awarded to any individual agency. All agencies will be capped at no more than 5 percent of their actual sworn force strength as reported in the application, up to a maximum of 25 officers. Agencies with a service population of 1 million or above may apply for up to 25 officer positions; agencies with a service population less than 1 million may apply for up to 15 officer positions. The request of any agency with a sworn force strength less than or equal to 20 is capped at one officer. Applicants may allocate the capped number of officer positions, as indicated, across new hires, rehires of officers already laid off, and rehires of officers scheduled to be laid off on a future date.

**Budget-Related Questions**

Q. What are allowable fringe benefits?

A. In addition to Social Security, Medicare, health insurance, life insurance, vacation, sick leave, retirement, Worker's Compensation, and unemployment insurance, the following are allowable fringe benefits: (1) dental insurance, (2) vision insurance, (3) prescription drugs, (4) sick days (if not included in base salary), (5) vacation days (if not included in base salary), (6) holiday pay, (7) disability insurance, (8) accidental death and disability, (9) 401K plan, (10) liability insurance, (11) shift differential payments, (12) accident insurance, (13) bonding insurance, (14) Police Trust, (15) state funded retirement system, (16) professional liability insurance, (17) Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA) tax, (18) survivor benefit. Other benefits, such as training, equipment (e.g., uniforms, weapons, vehicles), severance pay, hazard pay, etc., are not allowed. The COPS Office will not pay for any fringe benefits not listed, and if your agency pays those benefits for locally-funded officer positions, your agency will be required to do so for CHP-funded officer positions with local funds. **Please Note: If sick leave and/or vacation leave costs are already reflected in the base salary figure provided in *Section 14A, Subsection A. Base Salary Information*, please DO NOT also list these costs individually under *Fringe Benefits (Section 14A, Subsection B).***

Q: How do I determine the healthcare and fringe benefits costs for my agency?

A: An agency should contact its Human Resources/Benefits Office to help determine their costs for healthcare and fringe benefits.

Q: How should an agency calculate the first-year salary and benefit package of officers who will be recruits promoted to sworn officer positions, given that a recruit and sworn officer fall under different pay and benefit levels?

A: The first-year salary and benefits package should cover the "blend" of both the recruitment academy and the post-graduation amounts, with the sworn officer salary and benefits amount used to cover the salaries and benefits of the officer post-graduation.

Q: My agency has officers that are exempt from Social Security benefit deductions. How should I address this in the CHP application?

A: Agencies who have officers that are exempt from Social Security benefit deductions should check the "Exempt" option on the application. By checking "Exempt," the agency is not required to submit additional information.

Q: Are indirect costs allowable under the CHP grant?

A: No, CHP does not pay for any indirect costs. CHP only pays for approved entry-level salaries and fringe benefits of entry-level full-time sworn officers over three years.

Q: May CHP grant funds be used to pay the salaries and benefits of officer recruits while they are in the academy, prior to being sworn in?

A: Yes, an agency may use CHP funding to pay the CHP-funded positions while in the academy if it is the standard practice of the agency to do so with locally-funded recruits. To comply with the nonsupplanting requirement, the agency should hire the recruits post-award.

Q: The officers we plan to rehire are experienced officers who are paid a higher than entry-level salary and benefit package. May we use the CHP funds to pay their salaries?

A: Yes, but only up to the entry-level portion of their salary and benefits package. CHP funds are awarded based on your agency's current entry-level sworn officer salary and benefits package. You may use CHP funding to hire or rehire experienced officers, but any additional costs higher than entry-level must be paid with local agency funds, not CHP funds.

Q: CHP states it will provide "75 percent of funding for approved entry level salaries and fringe benefits of full-time officers." How does this apply in cases where law enforcement agencies have various base pay rates based on the prior education level of the officer?

A: In the limited cases of agencies that offer more than one entry-level salary and benefit package based on prior education for new officers with no prior law enforcement experience, you may average those salaries and benefits to report your entry-level salary and benefits. Please note, however, that any higher salaries and benefits that are paid to compensate for prior law enforcement experience are not

considered entry-level and should not be included in this average or otherwise reported as entry-level. If awarded CHP funding an agency must only use CHP funding to pay the actual entry-level officer's salary and benefits and any CHP funds remaining after the 36-month award period will be de-obligated.

Q: If awarded funding from the CHP grant program, will our agency be obligated to keep the total number of officers on staff at the time the grant was awarded, or are we only required to keep the grant position at the end of the three-year program?

A: To comply with the nonsupplanting requirement of the CHP grant, the grantee must maintain its locally-funded sworn force baseline and any planned increases of officer positions during the grant award period through the retention period. To comply with the retention requirement of the CHP grant, the grantee must add all awarded officer positions to its law enforcement budget with state and/or local funds for at least 12 months at the conclusion of 36 months of federal funding for each position, over and above the locally-funded sworn force baseline. The purpose of CHP is to increase the total number of sworn officer positions that would have otherwise existed in the absence of the grant.

**Nonsupplanting Requirement**

Q: Does the nonsupplanting requirement apply to the CHP grant program?

A: Yes. The nonsupplanting requirement is a legal requirement in the Public Safety and Community Policing Act, which is the COPS Office's authorizing statute. The nonsupplanting requirement means COPS Office grant funds must be used to supplement (not replace) state, local, or Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) funds that would have been dedicated toward law enforcement if federal funding had not been awarded. As it applies to your agency's CHP grant, grantees must not reduce the level of state, local, or BIA funding that would have been dedicated toward sworn officer positions as a result of receiving federal funding.

**CHP Funding and Other COPS Office Grants**

Q: May our agency request funding under CHP if we have an active COPS Office hiring grant for sworn officer positions?

A: Yes. Agencies with an active COPS Office hiring grant are not disqualified from applying for a CHP grant, but the CHP-funded position(s) must be over and above the number of officer positions funded in the agency's local budget and under any other COPS Office hiring grant.

Q: Can CHP funding be used to retain officers hired under other COPS Office hiring programs?

A: No. CHP grant funding may not be used to comply with the retention requirement of your other COPS Office hiring grants. Instead, your agency must use state, local, or tribal funding to retain the COPS Office-funded positions for the required retention period following the conclusion of the grant period. In addition, the retained officer position(s) must be over and above your agency's locally-funded sworn force and any full-time sworn positions awarded under the CHP grant.

**Retention Requirement**

Q: What is the retention requirement?

A: Under CHP, the retention requirement establishes that grant recipients must plan to retain—at the time of grant application and actually retain—each officer position awarded for at least one year (12 months) following the conclusion of three years (36 months) of federal funding for that position. The additional officer positions should be added to the grantee's law enforcement budget with state and/or local funds, over and above the number of locally-funded officer positions that would have existed in the absence of the grant. Absorbing CHP-funded officers through attrition, rather than by adding the extra positions to your budget with additional funding, does not meet the retention requirement.

Q: When does the actual retention period begin?

A: The actual retention period begins after each awarded CHP position has completed the 36-month (three-year) grant funding period.

Q: When does the 36-month grant award period begin for each awarded officer position?

A: There is a standard grant award period. The grant has a start and end date; however, the actual 36-month period begins for an awarded officer position when that position has been filled. If the position becomes vacant during the award period, your agency must hire a new, additional officer to fill the position. The retention period begins for an awarded officer position once that position has completed the 36-month implementation period. If an agency is awarded several officer positions, the retention period for each individual officer position begins based on the completion of 36 months of funding for each position (not based on the cumulative overall grant award end date).

Q: When does my agency have to begin funding the position(s) in the local budget?

A: Your agency should fund the awarded officer position(s) in your local budget as each position completes the 36-month grant period. If a funded position becomes vacant during the award period, your agency would need to fill the position with a new, additional officer to complete the entire 36-month grant period before retaining and adding the position into the local budget.

Q: What documentation does my agency need to maintain in the event of an audit or monitoring site visit to demonstrate compliance with the retention requirement?

A: Your agency should maintain documentation demonstrating its intent to retain the CHP-funded officer positions, the anticipated funding source(s), the employment dates for each officer position funded under the CHP grant, and the dates each officer position started the retention period.

**Other Questions**

Q: What is the formula for disbursing these CHP grant funds?

A: CHP is not a "formula" grant program. All applications will be reviewed based on their answers to the fiscal health questions, crime statistics, community policing plan, and other relevant factors determined by the COPS Office. Awards will be made on a competitive basis.

Q: How does an agency verify their application was received?

A: Agencies should log back into the “Account Access” page on the COPS Office website and click on the “CHP” link to access their application and verify that their application was submitted and received by the COPS Office before the application deadline (the current application status will be “Completed and submitted”). Agencies whose applications were not received by the COPS Office before the deadline will receive a message in red stating that the application deadline has passed and they will not be able to proceed further.

Q: When should I expect notification if awarded CHP grant funds?

A: The COPS Office anticipates making CHP grant award announcements prior to September 30, 2014.

**Questions?** Please call the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.