

COPS Hiring Program (CHP)—How Decisions were Made to Allocate \$399 Million When More than \$572 Million was Requested

The CHP solicitation opened on January 9, 2020, and applications were accepted through March 11, 2020. The COPS Office received 1,091 applications from law enforcement agencies requesting \$572,820,397 in federal funding for 4,113 officer positions.

The COPS Office focused on several priority areas for additional consideration

Applicants who chose Violent Crime, School-Based Policing through School Resource Officers, or Homeland and Border Security as their problem focus area received additional consideration for CHP funding.

Additional consideration was also given to applicants for the following situations:

- The applicant provides law enforcement services in a rural community.
- The applicant experienced an unanticipated catastrophic event.
- The applicant partners with federal authorities to address the issue of illegal immigration.
- The applicant is in a state that had enacted anti-human trafficking laws that treat minors engaged in commercial sex as victims (referred to as “safe harbor” laws) or permit individuals to vacate arrest or prosecution records for nonviolent offenses as a result of being trafficked.
- The applicant committed to hiring or rehiring at least one military veteran.
- The applicant had not received CHP funding during the previous two CHP funding cycles.

The COPS Office developed a streamlined application to meet the requirements of the law

The COPS Office developed a streamlined application for CHP funding that met the requirements of the statute and mission of the COPS Office. The application was designed to lessen the burden of applying while increasing the ability of law enforcement to implement community-policing strategies within the three primary elements of community policing: (1) problem solving, (2) partnerships, and (3) organizational transformation.

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 public finance to develop appropriate application questions. Applicants were asked to submit information on the following indicators:

- Reported crime for the previous three years
- Current commitment to community policing
- Planned community policing activities
- Changes in annual budgets for previous three years
- Poverty and unemployment rates

The COPS Office checked and double-checked, verifying the data applicants provided

COPS Office application systems contains numerous built-in validation and logic checks to help prevent the submission of erroneous data. In addition, once applications were submitted, specialists in the COPS Office reviewed the data for irregularities. The COPS Office reviewed more than 350 data points within each application. In some cases, the COPS Office contacted applicant agencies to verify information provided in their application. This data verification process, though time-consuming, was crucial to ensuring that all applicants were properly evaluated based on accurate economic, crime, and community policing data.

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

The COPS Office focused on balancing applicants' need for federal assistance with crime rates and applicants' current commitment to community policing and their proposed community policing strategy. For scoring purposes, fiscal need accounted for 33.3 percent of the overall score, crime issues accounted for 33.3 percent of the overall score, and community policing issues accounted for 33.3 percent of the overall score.

Statutory considerations

Two long-standing statutory requirements designed to ensure national distribution of COPS Office funding had an impact on which applications were ultimately funded. The COPS Office is statutorily required to distribute half of all hiring funds to agencies serving populations of more than 150,000 and half to those serving fewer than 150,000. In addition, the COPS Office is statutorily required to ensure that at least one-half of one percent of hiring funds are allocated to each state or territory with eligible applications.