

COPS Office School Violence Prevention Program (SVPP)—How Decisions were Made to Allocate \$50 Million When More than \$147 Million was Requested

The SVPP solicitation opened on February 4, 2020, and application submissions were required by April 29, 2020. The COPS Office received 502 applications from states, units of government and their public agencies, and Indian tribes requesting more than \$147 million in federal funding.

The COPS Office developed an application to meet the requirements of the law

The COPS Office developed an application for SVPP funds that met the requirements of the statute with a focus on advancing public safety by providing funds to improve security at schools and on school grounds. States, units of local government, Indian tribes, and public agencies (e.g., school districts) were eligible to apply for funding.

The COPS Office balanced scoring indicators

Applicants were asked a variety of school safety and fiscal health questions so that the COPS Office could assess each applicant's need for improved security and fiscal need for funding.

Applicants were asked to submit information including the following:

- Census population
- Crime indicators
- Dollars spent per student
- Total number of schools
- Total school enrollment

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

The application system contains numerous built-in logic checks to help prevent the submission of erroneous data. Once the application period closed, specialists in the COPS Office immediately reviewed the data contained therein. The COPS Office reviewed multiple data points within each application and

in some cases contacted applicants to verify information provided in their application. This verification process was crucial to ensuring that all applicants were properly evaluated based on accurate and reliable economic, crime, and school data.

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

Basic Minimum Requirements, Fiscal and School Safety Need Data Review

Each of the 502 applications underwent a basic minimum requirements review to ensure that (1) funding requested was for allowable costs, (2) the applicant was eligible to apply for funding, and (3) the applicant's project narrative was responsive to the section headings described in section 13: Narrative Review.

The fiscal and school safety need was evaluated for each eligible applicant that passed the basic minimum requirements review. The COPS Office focused on balancing the applicant's need for federal financial assistance with their school safety need based on their responses to a series of application questions. All applicants were ranked based on their relative fiscal and school safety need.

Comprehensive Narrative Review

Approximately 335 applications were advanced for a comprehensive review of their written narrative. Applications advanced included those with the greatest demonstrated fiscal and school safety need. Furthermore, to ensure geographic diversity, a minimum of two (2) applications from each state were advanced to the next phase wherever possible. The COPS Office also ensured that rural, suburban, and urban areas were all well represented.

Reviewers evaluated factors in the Project and Budget Narrative sections of the application, including the following:

- Funding request and integration
- Management and implementation plan
- School safety planning and assessment efforts
- Sustainability plan

Final Funding Decisions

The COPS Office considered a number of factors when making final funding decisions, including the following:

- Capacity to make the improvements sought with grant funds
- Demonstrated need for financial assistance

- Demonstrated need for improved school security
- Geographic distribution—including urban, suburban, and rural areas
- Strength of the written narrative proposal
- The presence of a catastrophic incident in the jurisdiction
- Use of evidence-based strategies and programs such as those identified by the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative of the U.S. Department of Justice

A total of 160 of the 502 SVPP requests were funded, which represents approximately 32 percent of the total number of applications submitted.