

COPS Office School Violence Prevention Program (SVPP)—How Decisions were Made to Allocate Nearly \$73 Million When More than \$300 Million was Requested

The SVPP solicitation opened on March 15, 2023, and application submissions were required by May 17, 2023. The COPS Office received 1,022 applications from states, units of government and their public agencies, and Indian tribes requesting more than \$330 million in federal funding and an average request of \$334,339.

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 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 1,022 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 proposal was responsive to the solicitation.

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

The applications were then evaluated using the factors below:

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

Final Funding Decisions

The COPS Office considered several 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 206 of the 1,022 SVPP requests were funded, which represents approximately 20 percent of the total number of applications submitted.