



COPS Office Tribal Resources Grant Program (TRGP) Listening Session

Thursday, September 15, 2022

2:00 p.m. Eastern Time

Meeting Summary

- **Opening remarks from COPS Office Assistant Director Matthew Scheider**
 - The COPS Office has a long history of working with and supporting Indian Country.
 - The COPS Office tries to work hand in hand with the law enforcement on the ground to model, support, and advance community policing.
 - TRGP offers training support and aims to assist with hiring and re-hiring of officers, as well as acquisition of equipment.
 - The [COPS Training Portal](#) and [CRI-TAC](#) are great resources for free training and technical assistance.
 - The [Community Policing Dispatch](#) newsletter, [The Beat](#) podcast series, and [What's New In Blue](#) video series are great ways to stay informed.
 - The primary objective of the listening session is for the COPS Office to hear from people on the ground who can help shape and fine-tune the direction of the program. The COPS Office wants to listen, understand, and adjust/design programs according to the needs of the field and those on the ground working every day to advance the mission of community policing.
- **Matt Lysakowski provided a brief overview of TRGP.**
 - Two-pronged program
 1. TRGP-HIRE (Hiring) (entry-level positions)
 2. TRGP-E/T (Equipment and Training)
 - Tribal-specific program (i.e., only tribes are eligible)
 - About 40% of applicants funded in recent years (per poll data, 74% of attendees have been awarded)
 - Seeks to do the following:
 - Address the most serious law enforcement needs
 - Implement/enhance community policing strategies
 - Engage law enforcement in strategic planning
 - Increase capacity of tribal law enforcement agencies
 - Provide support resources and capacity enhancement for tackling challenging priorities head-on

- CTAS (Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation) combines most of DOJ’s tribal-specific programs into one solicitation to make it easier for tribes to apply and easier for DOJ to review the applications.
- **Anne Beamon opened a discussion of allowable and unallowable costs.**
 - **The COPS Office tries to be as expansive as possible with allowable costs.** TRGP probably offers the broadest scope of allowable costs of any COPS Office program.
 - Discussion themes
 - **Relevance of geography, terrain, and local conditions on the needs of the department, particularly in relation to equipment**
 - The COPS Office should continue to reach out to the department when it doesn’t understand the need for a particular request. The COPS Office may not always understand the conditions on the ground, and those writing the grant application may not know what they need to explain.
 - Particularly true in remote locations in Alaska
 - **Jason Wilson** noted that the COPS Office has done a good job evaluating the proposals based on the conditions on the ground that that agency is facing and that he particularly appreciates the willingness of the COPS Office to reach out directly when something is unclear in a submission/request.
 - The COPS Office should continue to offer feedback to help departments understand what information was useful and what information was lacking in the application.
 - Many smaller agencies do not have grant writers and need more guidance in proper preparation of applications.
 - **Matt Lysakowski** noted that the COPS Office also provides feedback to applications that are not funded to help agencies better understand why.
 - **Melissa Harrington** added that the COPS Office is also adjusting the feedback for awardees. If budgets are adjusted in an award package, the award information will include explanations for those adjustments (e.g., the budget included an unallowable item and the COPS Office will clarify which requested item is unallowable).
 - **Increasingly, the costs of using hardware are incorporated into related services contracts for cloud storage, warranties, and/or hardware servicing.**
 - Generally, these costs are also allowable, but only for the duration of the grant period. This may be different for the BJA body-worn camera program, but for TRGP, these items fall under the equipment and training awards for 3 years.
 - The COPS Office will work to clarify this in future solicitations—that the hardware, software, service agreements, cloud storage, and any other necessary associated costs are allowable costs for the duration of the award period.

- **Exceptions to allowable/unallowable costs**
 - The allowable cost list has been growing, but reviews can be requested for specific unallowable items. Exceptions are possible if a sufficient need is demonstrated.
 - **Mary Jarvis** asked about travel and copy machines.
 - Travel to the CTAS New Awardee Orientation is already an allowable cost and should be included in the proposed budget. If an agency demonstrates a need for more than two people to travel, funding for a third can also be considered.
 - Copy machines fall under the “office equipment” category of unallowable items. The COPS Office will look into whether this can be moved or limited exceptions can be made for demonstrated need.
- **Weapons suppressors are not specifically listed as unallowable**, but they likely do not fall under “basic issued equipment” and are therefore unlikely to be approved.
- **There are other COPS Office–funded solicitations that tribal PDs can apply for:** For example, the [Community Policing Development Program](#) and the [Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act Program](#) cover therapy and counseling for officers, though it may also be covered under CTAS Purpose Area 1.
- **Funding duration/length of award**
 - People generally preferred 5 years to 3 years for the hiring award length period.
 - Additional time can be requested, when needed, by communicating with the grant program specialist.
- **Maximum award amounts**
 - **More funding for each award means fewer applicants awarded.** Currently 40% of applications are funded; increasing maximums would likely reduce that number.
 - The COPS Office is always reevaluating the best use of the funds and how to make the greatest impact.
 - Right now, maximum award limits are as follows:
 - Fewer than 10 sworn officers, maximum of \$600,000
 - 10 to 19 sworn officers, maximum of \$700,000
 - 20 or more sworn officers, maximum of \$900,000
 - **Jason Wilson:** It would be great to have flexibility on the amounts (i.e., for award maximums to be guidelines rather than hard caps), because recruitment and retention has become increasingly challenging and offering better salaries could make a difference, particularly in trying to fill longstanding vacancies.
- **Priority areas**
 - **Currently, MMIP and Human Trafficking are focus areas.** The participants expressed strong support for both priorities, though some noted that MMIP is not an issue in their community.
 - **Other suggestions include opioid and substance abuse, meth, and domestic violence.** CTAS also funds two civilian positions: (1) an anti-meth and (2) an anti-opioid coordinator.

- **Application submission**
 - Other CTAS purpose areas prohibit prior year awardees from applying/being awarded again, but Purpose Area 1 does not. The participants agreed with this approach, indicating that prior year awardees should still be able to apply.
 - Although only one person submits an application in the portal, multiple people can work on the different files offline, then the files can be uploaded into the system once completed, enabling an entire team to develop the submission, even as only one person is responsible for submitting. In addition, different user roles can be created in the JustGrants system.
 - The COPS Office hosts applicant webinars when solicitations are open. Potential applicants are encouraged to attend and ask questions.
- **Demographic form.** Some tribal agencies, particularly those with more transient populations, often investigate crimes that take them off the reservation and then find evidence of other criminal conduct off the reservation.
 - In these instances, the population served includes individuals outside of the designated jurisdiction.
 - This can be described in the narrative, but the COPS Office will look into whether the information can be captured in other ways (i.e., as part of the demographic form itself).
- **Reprogramming funds.** If your grant included funds for travel to the CTAS new awardee orientation but did not use them because the orientation was held virtually in 2020 and 2021, reach out to your Grant Program Specialist to discuss the possibility of reprogramming those funds toward other priorities.
- **Training and technical assistance**
 - [COPS Office Tribal Resources](#) page includes the following:
 - Grants
 - Training and Technical Assistance
 - *Dispatch* articles
 - Publications
 - Videos
 - Podcasts
 - [CRI-TAC](#)
 - Help with policy reviews, meeting facilitation, virtual mentoring, and more
 - No cost
 - Easy to request
 - Ideal for both grant awardees and non-awardees
 - Overwhelming majority (18/19) of participants had never heard of CRI-TAC prior to the session.

- [COPS Training Portal](#)
 - E-learning courses
 - AZ POST has certified the e-learning courses.
 - The COPS Office is working on other POST certifications as well.
 - In-person courses
 - No cost
- **Other COPS Office programs**
 - [COPS Hiring Program](#) (CHP). Covers 75% of officer salary and benefits up to \$125,000 for 3 years.
 - [Community Policing Development](#) (CPD).
 - Crisis Intervention Teams, De-escalation, Accreditation
 - Microgrants—seed funds for innovative community policing projects, typically in specific focus areas described in the solicitation
 - No local match requirement
 - [School Violence Prevention Program](#): funds school safety equipment (locks, lighting, etc.), technology, and training for local law enforcement
 - [Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act](#) (LEMHWA): funds training, peer mentoring, and mental health program activities for law enforcement officers
- **Other feedback and impacts relating to TRGP and Purpose Area 1**
 - COPS Office grants have been instrumental in funding new equipment, uniforms, a reporting program (reporting to the state), and new vehicles for officers. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. **Carl Stoddard** expressed gratitude for all the support from the COPS Office.
 - Couldn't provide law enforcement services in small village without the CTAS funding. **Denise Peterson** also expressed gratitude for the support of the COPS Office, noting that the grant money is the only funding they have to support recruitment and retention of law enforcement.
 - Issues navigating the JustGrants portal and getting responses from grant program specialists about extending grants
 - Specifically, some Grant Program Specialists have been nearly nonresponsive or unhelpful.
 - **Matt Lysakowski** noted that there is also a dedicated JustGrants team and website that can provide support specifically with issues law enforcement agencies are experiencing while navigating within the portal.

- **Chad Dodge:** Looking for ways to network and engage the LEO community for advice, troubleshooting, best practices, etc. – specifically within tribal communities and PDs, allowing officers (and in particular newer officers) to connect with those who are more experienced and may have deeper knowledge of customs, practices, and methods.
 - He mentioned the possibility of a Facebook group or similar type of networking resources.
 - **Melissa Harrington** suggested looking at the published list of grants and then networking with nearby grant recipients or recipients with similar interests/programs.
 - **Gary Henderson** mentioned that he would like to help connect and network with others to share his experience and that of others within his agency. The COPS Office agreed to put together and distribute a participant list to help facilitate this type of networking.
- **Charles Palmer:** Page limits are restrictive—sometimes to communicate effectively with sufficient explanation and nuance, more than 10–12 pages are needed in response to the solicitation. The COPS Office will revisit the page limits and make sure they still make sense and are not unnecessarily restrictive or restrictive in a way that is counterproductive.