

COPS Hiring Program (CHP)—How Decisions were Made to Allocate the \$113 Million When More than \$376 Million was Requested

The CHP solicitation opened on May 18, 2015, and all applications were required to be submitted by June 19, 2015.

Ultimately, the COPS Office received applications from 1,103 law enforcement agencies requesting 3,083 officer positions for more than \$376,682,744 in federal funding.

The COPS Office focused on several priority areas for additional consideration

Military veterans

Under FY 2015 CHP, new hire officer positions are not required to be military veterans. However, as the COPS Office supports the Attorney General's commitment to hiring military veterans whenever possible, applicants who committed to hiring or rehiring at least one military veteran under CHP received additional consideration for FY 2015 CHP funding. A military veteran hire must have served on active duty for a period of at least 180 consecutive days any part of which occurred on or after September 11, 2001. In FY 2015, 140 agencies received funding with a commitment to hire or rehire at least one military veteran using CHP funding for a total of 254 veterans.

School Resource Officers

Applicants who requested officer positions in order to deploy school resource officers (SROs) were required to choose the "School Based Policing through School Resource Officers" community policing problem area in their 2015 CHP application and likewise received additional consideration for FY 2015 CHP funding. Agencies requesting multiple officer positions in order to deploy school resource officers must deploy all their funded officer positions as school resource officers.

Moreover, CHP grantees that chose this specific community policing problem area will not be allowed to change it post-award. CHP grantees that use CHP funding to deploy SROs will also be required to submit to the COPS Office the contact information for each school partner where they intend to deploy the SROs and to provide a Memorandum of Understanding between the CHP grantee and the school partner. In FY 2015, 59 agencies received funding for a total of 128 SRO positions.

Homicide and gun violence

The COPS Office supports the Attorney General's priority goal of reducing violent crime especially if it is gun-related. Applicants who chose "Homicide" or "Gun Violence" as a problem area in their 2015 CHP

application received additional consideration for CHP funding. Moreover, grantees that chose either of these specific community policing problem areas will not be allowed to change the problem area post-award. In FY 2015, 25 funded agencies selected either “Homicide” or “Gun Violence” as their jurisdiction’s problem area, committing to hire 245 officers to address these problems.

Homeland security and building trust

Applicants who chose either “Homeland Security” or “Building Trust” as the problem/focus area in their 2015 CHP application also received additional consideration for funding. “Homeland Security” issues include protecting critical infrastructures, information/intelligence concerns, and other homeland security problems, while “Building Trust” includes issues surrounding fairness and impartiality, transparency, respect, and other trust-related topics. As with the problem areas mentioned previously, grantees that chose either of these specific community policing problem/focus areas will not be allowed to change the problem/focus area post-award. In FY 2015, nine funded agencies selected “Homeland Security” as their jurisdiction’s problem area, committing to hire 18 officers to address these problems; 83 agencies that selected “Building Trust” received funding for 365 officers.

Non-problem area factors

Additional consideration was given to applicants that had experienced an unanticipated catastrophic event, as well as to those applicants with a neighborhood or other geographic area designated as a Promise Zone as part of the President’s Promise Zone Initiative. Ultimately, these non-problem area factors contributed to the selection of six grantees for 54 officers.

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

The COPS Office developed an application for CHP funds that met the requirements of the statute and mission of the COPS Office to increase 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 such indicators as the following:

- Reported crime for the previous three years
- Current commitment to community policing
- Planned community policing activities
- Changes in budget for law enforcement agencies
- Poverty and unemployment rates

In asking a variety of fiscal health questions, the COPS Office focused on getting as complete a view as possible of the fiscal need of applicants through objective and verifiable indicators that all agencies, from rural communities to large cities, could accurately report.

The community policing philosophy engages in a proactive and systematic examination of identified problems that can be countered with effective responses. Applicants were asked to identify the specific community problem they wished to address with COPS Office funding.

Community policing relies heavily on partnerships and relationships between law enforcement and the community it serves. A number of questions were designed to examine an agency's formation of partnerships such as working with other public agencies, private organizations, or participation in regional law enforcement partnerships. Agencies were asked to identify the number and types of partnerships they intended to initiate or enhance in order to address their identified problem.

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

The application system contains numerous built-in logic checks to help prevent the submission of erroneous data. In addition, once the applications were submitted, specialists in the COPS Office immediately reviewed the data contained therein. The COPS Office reviewed more than 375 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 and reliable economic, crime, and community policing data. This process included checking against available reported data such as the Uniform Crime Statistics reported annually to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

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

Selection methodology

The COPS Office focused on balancing the applicant's need for federal assistance (as measured by economic and fiscal health questions) with crime rates and the applicant's current commitment to community policing and their proposed community policing strategy. For FY 2015, an applicant's commitment to community policing and the strength of their overall community policing strategy were the basis for initial scoring. A minimum score was established for the community policing portion of the application. Thirty-nine agencies that did not meet the score were removed from further consideration.

For the remaining applicants, fiscal need constituted 20 percent, crime 30 percent, and community policing 50 percent of the overall score. In addition, models similar to those used in FY 2011–2014 were used to determine the weight of the questions within each broad category. For example, within the 20 percent of the score allocated to the need for federal assistance, applicants were ranked on measures of recent economic conditions as well as those of systemic socioeconomic health. COPS Office staff followed up with applicants and reviewed publicly available data to ensure that the information was as error-free as possible before completing the ranking protocol.

Because of the high demand and limited funding available, only 209 of the 1,103 CHP requests were ultimately funded, which is only about 18.9 percent of the total number of agencies that submitted applications.

In addition, two long-standing statutory requirements designed to ensure national distribution of COPS Office funding had an impact on which applications were ultimately funded. First, the COPS Office must distribute half of all hiring funds to agencies serving populations of more than 150,000 and half to those of fewer than 150,000. Second, by law the COPS Office must ensure that at least one-half of one percent of hiring funds (\$569,532 for FY 2015) is allocated to each state or territory with eligible applicants. Although this ultimately means that sometimes a lower scoring applicant in one state receives funding ahead of a higher scoring applicant in another, this requirement helps ensure that smaller states and territories are not excluded from funding.

Capping methodology

All agencies' requests were capped at no more than 5 percent of their actual sworn force strength as reported on the date of application. Agencies with a service population of 1 million or more were eligible to apply for up to 25 officer positions while agencies with a service population less than 1 million were eligible to apply for up to 15 officer positions. The request of any agency with a sworn force strength less than or equal to 20 was capped at one officer.