



Legislation Text

File #: 23-0921, Version: 1

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 4, 2023

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: JAMES F. PARAION, CITY MANAGER /s/

FROM: DON HAYES, CHIEF, ALEXANDRIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of a Grant Application to the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice American Rescue Plan Act Law Enforcement Equipment Grant Program.

ISSUE: Consideration of a grant application to the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice (DCJS) American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Law Enforcement Equipment Grant Program

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

1. Retroactively approve the submission of an application to the ARPA Equipment Grant for up to \$309,000; and
2. Authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: This funding opportunity is designed to help reduce incidents of violent crime and gun violence, which have increased since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding from the ARPA Equipment Grant can be used to purchase advanced technology and equipment and is made available with the purpose of enabling law enforcement to respond more efficiently and effectively to the rise in gun violence.

This is a formula-based grant opportunity. To determine the maximum award for each locality, the DCJS considered multiple factors including crime rates, population, financial stress, and police officer population. The maximum allowable award for the City is \$309,000, and there is no local match requirement.

Due to the late notification of this grant opportunity, this action is contingent on retroactive City Council approval for a grant submitted on March 24 and pursuant to Council discussion at its March 28 meeting.

DISCUSSION: The City of Alexandria has seen a rise in violent crimes when comparing data from pre-pandemic (2019) to post-pandemic (2022). The data shows an increase in all categories of violent crimes, as illustrated below:

- All reportable incidents involving guns increased by approximately 58% (to 152 from 96).
- Shootings with injuries increased by approximately 175% (to 11 from 4).
- Shootings with damage to property increased by approximately 100% (to 24 from 12).
- Homicides increased by 200% (to 6 from 2).
- Aggravated Assault offenses decreased by 12.2% (to 172 from 196).

With this funding, Alexandria Police Department (APD) proposes to implement a one-year pilot program using gunshot detection equipment that uses audio sensors and algorithms to quickly identify and locate gunfire incidents in real-time. Each system covers one square mile and multiple systems could be deployed. The systems provide precise location information that can aid in investigations and the collection of evidence. Any system piloted would be linked to police vehicles for immediate notification and response, which is typically much faster than waiting for 911 calls for service. The Police Department will use existing data and coordinate with multiple stakeholders, including the Office of Race and Social Equity, to guide the pilot program.

FISCAL IMPACT: The ARPA Equipment Grant is a formula-based grant that offers a maximum award of \$309,000 with no local match required. Funds are expected to be awarded in June 2023, and purchases must be completed by June 30, 2024. Gunshot detection systems come in a range of options, but APD proposes to lease a system for one year as a pilot, therefore there are no additional costs at this time for staffing or information technology support and maintenance. A typical system would allow coverage of one square mile at a cost between \$50,000 and \$75,000. If approved for this grant funding the City would cover up to four square miles in this pilot effort (i.e. four systems could cover four square miles at a cost of approximately \$300,000).

STAFF:

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