

Proposal Narrative

Description of the Issue

The City of Lowell is the 5th largest city in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with approximately 115,500 residents. Lowell is a very diverse community; it has been estimated that nearly one-third of residents have emigrated from a variety of countries including Cambodia, Brazil, Portugal, and several African nations. The Lowell Police Department (LPD) consists of 232 sworn full-time police officers (as of 7/13/2023) who are responsible for patrolling 14.5 square miles. Additionally, 99 full and part-time civilian staff members support operations in various capacities including: dispatch, records management, community outreach, grant and fiscal management, research and development, crime analysis, and management information systems. The LPD also has 2 police cadets whom are currently in the Lowell Police Academy scheduled to graduate in the fall at which time they will become sworn officers.

Since the mid-1990's, the LPD has been considered a leader in community policing. In fact, the LPD was previously part of the Advancing 21st Century Policing Initiative, which was a small cohort of law enforcement agencies from across the nation that have made significant strides in implementing the recommendations of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. Civilian staff members have been integral in allowing the department to implement evidenced-based, problem-oriented policing strategies, by allowing the department to deploy more sworn officers in patrol and investigative services. Over the years, these civilian staff members have become instrumental members of this organization, with departmental expertise that assists the LPD in achieving its overall goal of making Lowell the safest city possible for those who live, work, and visit the city. The LPD currently maintains numerous critical civilian staff members completely with state and federal grant funding. Since 2008, the City of Lowell,

like many cities nationwide, has been struggling financially. The City is also currently facing several required increases in the budget that make it difficult to provide additional funding to civilian personnel. This includes increases in pension costs (\$1.2 million), personnel costs, as well as “Cherry Sheet” assessments. Additionally, the City of Lowell is in the process of building a new high school, which was estimated to cost the city \$127.4 million after reimbursements from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) (total project cost: \$343 million). However, in March 2022, the total project cost increased by over \$30M as a result of labor availability and material costs. As a result of these increases as well as required increases in the LPD’s budget, there is limited room for civilian personnel in the department’s budget.

Project Design and Implementation

This grant funding will be used to support the partial salaries of two employees from the Research and Development Unit. In addition to retaining civilian staff members, a portion of funding will be utilized for travel to training opportunities. The LPD feels it is important to support professional development throughout its staff, as this will lead to better equipped, more productive employees. Due to a limited supply budget, a small portion of funds will also be used to purchase necessary office supplies for grant-funded staff.

Capabilities and Competencies

Research Analyst (Research and Development Unit)

The Research Analyst works on all of the LPD’s grant-funded programs. She will collect data and conduct analysis to ensure that all evidence-based programs are meeting stated goals

and objectives. She is also responsible for analyzing the criminal justice and evidence-based programs within the Department and researching other evidence-based programs that could be implemented in the future. The Research Analyst will also be responsible for collecting data for this solicitation's performance measures and report quarterly accountability metrics through the BJA's Performance Management Tool.

Program Manager (Research and Development Unit)

A portion of funding will be utilized to offset administrative costs incurred related to the management of the grant. Specifically, the Program Manager will dedicate time to tracking and analyzing data to be used in programmatic reports, completing BJA reports, submitting required documentation and responding to requests from BJA. The Program Manager will also communicate with internal partners and external organizations related to the FY 2023 JAG grant program.

Travel

The LPD will utilize funding for staff training, which will include travel costs. The trainings selected will benefit employees by assisting them in developing vital skills for their positions. For fiscal year 2023, the department will send two Command Staff and a civilian to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) annual conference. LPD staff attending this four-day conference will have the opportunity to attend educational workshops and network with other law enforcement personnel. In addition to the IACP conference, the LPD will send two Crime Analysts to a conference hosted by the Massachusetts Association of Crime Analysts (MACA). The Crime Analysts attending this event will have the opportunity to attend breakout

sessions, network events, and exhibitor showcases.

Supplies

A small portion of funding will be utilized to print pamphlets. The pamphlets will contain the Lowell Police Department's contact information as well as services provided by the department and resources available to residents. Funds will also be used to purchase a translation service (Language Line) for victims. As mentioned, Lowell is a diverse community, and it is estimated that approximately 40% of individuals over the age of five speak a language other than English at home.¹ The translation service will allow the department to address potential language barriers when communicating with residents or visitors who do not speak English. Additionally, the department will purchase office supplies, including toner, pens, paper, and folders. The supplies will be used by the Research and Development Unit and Crime Analysis and Intelligence Unit staff members to print reports, crime maps and other important documents.

Plan for Collecting Data

The Research Analyst will be responsible for collecting data on grant programs, and the Program Manager will be responsible for analyzing performance data for and submitting the grant reports. This includes information on community involvement, supplies, training and conferences, and overall amount of funds used.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). QuickFacts Lowell city, Massachusetts.
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/lowellcitymassachusetts>