

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 218 sworn full-time police officers (as of 9/5/2024) who are responsible for patrolling 14.5 square miles. Twelve cadets will also graduate from the Lowell Police Academy on October 10th and will be assigned to the Police Training Officer Program for three months. Additionally, 92 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.

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 assessments (\$2.6 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 three employees, one from the Crime Analysis and Intelligence Unit and two 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 civilians and sworn officers.

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.

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 2024 JAG grant program.

Crime Analyst (Crime Analysis and Intelligence Unit)

The LPD will also fund a portion of a Crime Analyst's salary. She reviews, collates, analyzes, and disseminates key information in support of the LPD's operational, administrative, and investigative efforts. The Analyst provides bulletins and crime-related updates to command staff members on a regular basis. She also creates crime bulletins relating to repeat offenders, active investigations, and officer safety information and disseminates them throughout the department. The Crime Analyst is essential to the LPD's overall mission as her work assists the department to effectively deploy officers to hot spot locations and ensures that the LPD is implementing data-driven approaches to proactively prevent crime.

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 2024, the department will send three 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 purchase a translation service (Language Line). The translation service will be used by officers when communicating with individuals who speak English as their second language. 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 or speak English as a second language. Additionally, the department will purchase office supplies including toner, pens, paper, and folders. The supplies will be used by sworn officers and civilian personnel.

Plan for Collecting the Data Required for This Solicitation's Performance Measures

The Research Analyst will be responsible for collecting data on grant programs, and the

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

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.