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Funding Your ConnectED Bus Solution: Tips and Tricks for Your School Violence Prevention Program Proposal

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STUDENT SAFETY AND THE BENEFITS OF THE PREMIER CONNECTED BUS SOLUTION

Buses are part of the public-school campus, and the COPS Office acknowledges this by funding school bus initiatives through their School Violence Prevention Program. We've seen numerous school bus projects awarded over the years. A few specific examples from 2021 include:

- \$278,171 was awarded to a small school district in Missouri for a project that included a GPS bus and student tracking system to improve safety during student transit and provide real-time data to both the school and the local 911 center and first responders.
- \$500,000 went to a large, geographically diverse county in Florida to improve student safety through a GPS platform in district buses and radio-frequency identification (RFID) cards for students. The technology funded for their project allows for expedited notification of local law enforcement agencies, including police and sheriff's departments, during an emergency.
- \$245,335 was awarded to an Ohio police department for the purchase and installation of school bus security cameras and related software for schools within their jurisdiction. This project allows the 911 center and police department to have real-time access to camera footage during an incident.

Besides the apparent commonalities among the above projects, you may also notice that these awarded projects all have collaborative, community-wide school safety projects involving various stakeholders, primarily school districts and the first responders

Technology solutions like the Premier Wireless ConnectED bus can help improve police response times in the event of an emergency.

and 911 centers within their jurisdictions. We know that school safety does not occur in a vacuum, and the COPS Office acknowledges this by requiring partnerships between the public school district and law enforcement agencies. According to the [National Safety Security Protection Association](#)ⁱ, the average duration of active shooter incidents in K-12 schools within the United States is 8 minutes. In comparison, "the average response time of campus and local law enforcement to these incidents is 18 minutes."ⁱⁱ While this response time has almost certainly improved over the years since the source study was done, we still have work to do, and technology like ConnectED buses can help.

SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Until recently, K-12 school safety funding was very reactive rather than proactive. If there was a serious incident like a school shooting, there were grant programs, like SERV, the School Emergency Response to Violence grant, that would provide funding to hire counselors or provide mental health assessments after the incident. Some states also tried to fill the gap with their own funding programs. States like Arizona and Virginia have long had programs to help hire school resource officers. Other states like New York and Pennsylvania had a few small equipment programs for schools to purchase preventive technology, but funding was scarce and varied widely from state to state.

i. National Safety Security Protection Association. (n.d.). 2019 NSSPA K-12 Active Shooter Study. NSSPA. Retrieved March 30, 2022, from <https://nsspa.org/statistics/2019-nsspa-k-12-active-shooter-study/>

ii. Ergenbright, C. E., & Hubbard, S. E. K. (2012, June). Defeating the Active Shooter: Applying Facility Upgrades in Order to Mitigate the Effects of Active Shooters in High Occupancy Facilities. Homeland Security Digital Library. Retrieved March 30, 2022, from <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=718911>

The School Violence Prevention Program was created in 2018 to help fund deterrent measures in public K-12 school districts across the United States.

This all changed in 2018 with the Stop School Violence Act. 2018 saw a dramatic uptick in school shootings, most notably at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Following Parkland, over two hundred thousand students and teachers marched on Washington to protest school gun violence. Following this chain of events, Congress passed this bipartisan legislation, which guaranteed \$100 million in annual grant funding through 2028.

This funding is split between two partner programs within the Department of Justice: The Stop School Violence Program (SSV) for threat assessments and mental health training and the School Violence Prevention Program (SVPP) for improving security at schools through evidence-based school safety programs. At its core, SVPP was created to fund improved coordination between law enforcement and K-12 schools. It helps fund deterrent, proactive measures and is quite friendly for technology purchases.

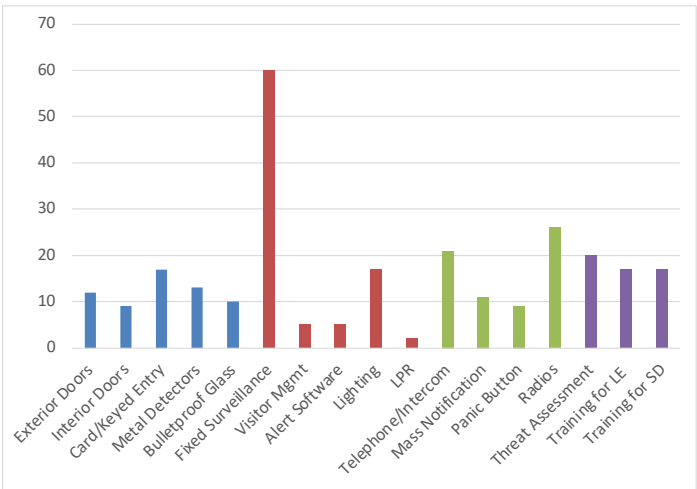


Figure 1 SVPP Awards by Topic

Through the SVPP program, funding is available for:

- Acquisition and installation of technology for expedited notification to law enforcement during an emergency
- Coordination with local law enforcement
- Placement and use of metal detectors, locks, lighting, and other deterrent measures
- Training for local law enforcement officers to prevent school violence
- Any other measure that may significantly improve security (any equipment or technology items included in the project budget must be linked to the enhancement or implementation of the SVPP project).

\$53,000,000 is available in total funding annually through 2028, with the application deadline occurring annually in late Spring. Individual award amounts vary up to \$500,000. Keep in mind that a cost match of 25% of the total project cost is required. If your proposal is awarded the full \$500,000, you (the applicant) must provide at least \$166,700 (the total project cost is approximately \$667,000).

Don't let these numbers intimidate you. Approximately \$1 million is reserved for microgrants for rural, tribal, and low-resourced school districts. Microgrant award requests are for \$100,000 or less, and the 25% local match requirement may be waived if a fiscal need is demonstrated.

Eligible applicants are states, units of local government, Indian tribes, and public agencies (e.g., police departments, sheriff's departments, and most importantly: K-12 school districts). Please note that schools must apply as an entire district, not individual schools or buildings within the district. While private and charter schools cannot apply directly, they may partner with another eligible applicant like the host school district or area law enforcement agency.

BECOME SVPP READY

Taking the time now to prepare your organization to apply will make the actual application process far less stressful.

Prepare Your Organization

- Connect with the staff in your organization needed to get your project off the ground. This may include the superintendent, finance manager, IT director, facilities and operations, and grant writer.
- Connect with community organizations that need to be involved in the planning and implementation of the school security project. Partners may include local law enforcement and other first responders.
- Plan and prioritize expenses for which your organization is seeking funding. Remember, any equipment or technology items must be clearly linked to the enhancement or implementation of the SVPP project.
- Plan to have a risk/vulnerability assessment done for your site. These can be provided by security companies or local law enforcement agencies.
- Register with SAM by visiting: <https://www.sam.gov>. SAM (System for Award Management) is an application that collects and disseminates business information about the federal government's trading partners related to contracts, grants, and electronic payment processes.
 - NOTE: This step typically takes 7-10 business days for processing
- Register with Grants.gov by visiting: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>
 - Complete the AOR profiles on Grants.gov and create a username and password. An applicant entity's Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), created when you register in SAM, will be used to complete this step.
- Register with the Justice Grants System (JustGrants) by visiting: <https://justicegrants.usdoj.gov/getting-started>

Taking steps to prepare now will save you time and headaches down the road.



Prepare Your Application

All Department of Justice grants are submitted and administered through their unique portal. When the application window for the COPS School Violence Prevention Program opens, you will begin your application in Grants.gov and complete your application in the JustGrants portal (dual deadlines).

- Complete the Standard Form (SF) 424 and the SF-LLL Lobbying Certification Form in Grants.gov. Within 24 hours after receiving a confirmation email from Grants.gov, the user applying Grants.gov will receive an email with instructions to complete the rest of the application in JustGrants.
- Two Authorized Representatives are required to complete the application
 - The Law Enforcement Executive is the highest-ranking official in the jurisdiction (chief of police, sheriff, etc.) and must be assigned the role of "Authorized Representative 1" in JustGrants.
 - The Government Executive is the highest-ranking government official in the jurisdiction (superintendent, mayor, board president, etc.) and must be assigned the role of "Authorized Representative 2" in JustGrants.

Check out the appendix for a list of questions you'll be expected to answer within your SVPP application!

SVPP is a competitive grant program with applicants from across the United States. Take time to create a strong proposal that will stand out to reviewers. The following elements must be included in the application submission to receive consideration for funding:

- Project Abstract – The abstract is a brief, high-level abstract summarizing the proposed project.
- Data Solicitation Surveys – This is a series of surveys asking for district data.
- Project Narrative – The narrative must be between two and eight pages and must include the following sections:
 - School Safety Planning Efforts
 - Funding Request and Integration
 - Management and Implementation Plan
 - Sustainability Plan
 - Budget Summary
- Budget Detail Worksheets and Budget Narrative – This will include all items that link to the proposed SVPP project discussed in the project narrative, the dollar amounts of items requested, and a statement acknowledging the local match requirement.
- Letters of Support – These are required from major partners and other significant stakeholders when a proposed project involves coordination with another jurisdiction or agency. Letters of support should confirm major partners/significant stakeholders planned involvement and support of the project.



HELPFUL TIPS

Consider the following tips on developing a successful proposal. These can not only help you with your SVPP proposal but are helpful for all your future grant-seeking endeavors.

Get to know the program.

Read the funding announcement to ensure you understand what the grantmaker requires. If the program isn't currently accepting applications, examine the previous year's materials instead. Have questions about what you've read? Contact the program coordinator or your state agency.

Assume grant reviewers are unaware of your organization.

Provide background information on your district and the surrounding community in the proposal. Give reviewers some context.

Craft a compelling problem statement.

Convey the need or challenge this project will address within your organization. The problem statement is your chance to provide a connection between your proposed project and the funder's priorities. Use recent district, state, and national statistics to support the problem statement. Local data can serve as a powerful rationale or justification to illustrate themes or reinforce national trends.

Provide a detailed budget and justification.

Budgets tell a story on their own, so consider what story your budget might tell if a reviewer doesn't read your proposal narrative. Thoroughly explain the need for each expense. Is each line item tied to a specific project goal and objective or activity in some way? Will that connection be clear to the reviewer? Additionally, be sure to triple-check your math. Budget errors may cause grant reviewers to lose confidence in your agency's ability to manage funds effectively.

Save time for review.

Ask an objective person to read your responses; even better if this person is somewhat unfamiliar with your organization. This extra set of eyes can check for spelling errors, confusing phrases or jargon, and unclear information. They can also give an overall impression of the project and ensure that you have followed the funder's directions. Failure to follow even the simplest submission instructions is a valid reason for reviewers to deny your project without taking the time to read the narrative you have spent so much time preparing.

Now that you've been armed with the information you need for your ConnectED bus SVPP proposal, it's time to get started!



NEXT STEPS IN YOUR GRANTSEEKING JOURNEY

Finding the best way to align your technology needs with the right grant program can be challenging – even for the most seasoned. If you'd prefer individual coaching on how to fold the technology and equipment you need into an upcoming grant proposal, reach out to your Premier Wireless representative. You'll be connected to a team of experienced Grants Development Consultants that will guide your agency through the entire grant-seeking process, including a comprehensive inventory of grant opportunities that fit your project and one-on-one consultation to help your agency navigate the landscape of technology-friendly grant funding.

To get started, follow these easy steps:

1. Share this guide with other leaders and decision-makers at your school or district. Examples include IT Director, Operations or Transportation Manager, Business Administrator, or any other individual responsible for grant administration.
2. Discuss your campus safety project goals internally and answer these questions:
 - Does your comprehensive school safety project include the district's buses?
 - Has district leadership approved grant-seeking efforts for the ConnectED bus solution?
 - Have you confirmed project commitment with your district's local law enforcement agency?
3. If you can answer "yes" to all the above questions, contact your Premier Wireless Account Executive and request a grant funding consultation.
4. When your Premier Wireless Account Executive contacts you about a meeting, confirm your availability and share the meeting invite with other leaders at your school or district.
5. Join the follow-up call with your Premier Wireless Account Executive, and your colleagues to discuss the appropriate next steps for pursuing SVPP grant funding for your Premier Wireless ConnectED bus student safety project!

APPENDIX

SVPP Applicant Questions

General Agency Information

Provide information for ONLY the lead applicant. Details on partner agencies will be requested later in the document.

Name of Lead Applicant	
Address of Lead Applicant	
Mailing Address 1	
Mailing Address 2	
City	
State	
Zip	
Confirm SAM Registration of Lead Applicant This application collects information about the federal government's trading partners related to contracts, grants, and payment processes. Check to see if your organization has a SAM account by visiting: https://sam.gov/content/status-tracker	
SAM Registration is set to expire on (DD/MM/YYYY)	
GNIS Number of Lead Applicant This number is assigned to all geographic entities by the U.S. Geological Survey. Check to see if your agency has a GNIS Feature ID at: http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/index.html .	
Lead Applicant's Fiscal Year (DD/MM/YYYY)	

Population Information

Is your jurisdiction primarily considered rural, urban, or suburban?	
What is the total population of the lead applicant (e.g., government agency) using the latest census estimate at https://data.census.gov/cedsci/ ?	
At the start of the 2023-24 school year, what is the total number of primary and secondary schools (including private schools) within the jurisdiction?	
At the start of the 2023-24 school year, what was the total enrollment of all schools (including private schools) within the jurisdiction?	
At the start of the 2023-24 school year, what is the total number of schools (including private schools) that will be impacted by this project?	
At the start of the 2023-24 school year, what was the total enrollment of the schools (including private schools) that will be impacted by this project?	

School Safety Information

Within the last five years, has your jurisdiction undergone a comprehensive risk assessment to understand the likelihood of specific threats or hazards?	Yes / No
Do you collect data on school violence incidents?	Yes / No
If so, do you analyze information captured from those incidents in after action assessment or critical incident review processes?	Yes / No

NOTE: Applicants may provide schools' After Action Report(s) or Assessment(s) to the application. While these reports will not be considered as part of your application review, they will allow the COPS Office and others to better understand these incidents, identify lessons learned, and effective practices. If you decide to provide an After Action Report(s) or Assessment(s), please redact all personally identifiable information (PII) prior to submission to the COPS Office. PII is defined as information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity such as name, social security number, biometric records (which include, but are not limited to, fingerprints, retina and iris patterns, voiceprints, DNA sequence, facial characteristics, and handwriting), either alone or when combined with other personal or identifying information that is linked or linkable to a specific individual, such as date and place of birth, address, email address, mother's maiden name. Please alert the Grants Office team if you would like to voluntarily include this information for your application.

Existing School Security Efforts

Record the % of primary and secondary schools (including private schools) in the jurisdiction that had implemented the following safety measures at the start of the 2023-2024 school year -

Emergency Management Plans	____%
Access Controls (i.e. working locks on all doors and entrance/exit procedures)	____%
ID Cards (i.e. student and administration cards with ID scanning device)	____%
Access to Social Media Alert Software	____%
Access to Mass Messaging Software	____%
Video Surveillance	____%
Metal Detectors	____%
Panic and immediate alarm notification systems	____%
School-wide Communication Systems	____%

School Safety Incidents

Record the total number of incidents that occurred at the schools in the jurisdiction and were reported to law enforcement during the 2020-21 school year -

Physical Attack (with or without a weapon)	
Possession of a Firearm or Explosive Device; or gun-related incident on school grounds	
Possession of a Knife or Sharp Object	
Distribution, Possession or Use of Illegal Drugs	
Theft/Larceny (taking items worth over \$10 w/o personal confrontation)	
Vandalism	

Financial Information for Applicant

Does the applicant plan to obtain necessary support and continue the program, project, or activity following the conclusion of federal support?	Yes / No
If yes, identify the source(s) of funding that will be utilized to continue this project following the conclusion of federal support. List all that apply:	
General funds	
Raise bond/tax issue	
Private sources/donations	
Non-federal asset forfeiture funds	
State, local, or other non-federal award funding	
Other (Please specify)	
Has the jurisdiction maintained its recommended reserve for economic uncertainty during the current and previous fiscal year?	Yes / No

Financial Information for School District(s)

What is the average per pupil spending allocated for all public schools in the jurisdiction?	
What is the average age of school buildings in your jurisdiction in years?	
What percentage of public school students in the jurisdiction are determined to be eligible for free or reduced-price lunch?	____%
Do any public schools in the jurisdiction receive Title I, Part A program funding from the Department of Education?	Yes / No
Have any schools that will be impacted by this project engaged in deficit spending during the current or previous fiscal year?	Yes / No

Sample Letter of Support

ORGANIZATION LETTERHEAD

April 1, 2022

INSERT SCHOOL OFFICIAL NAME, TITLE
SCHOOL NAME
ADDRESS
CITY, STATE, ZIP

RE: School Violence Prevention Program

Dear **INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL OFFICIAL**:

On behalf of **INSERT NAME OF PARTNER AGENCY**, it is my honor to provide this letter demonstrating our commitment to supporting the **INSERT SCHOOL/DISTRICT NAME SVPP** initiative.

INSERT NAME OF PARTNER AGENCY has been directly involved in the planning and design of the proposed school violence prevention model outlined in the appended proposal. To ensure full, effective and sustained development of the proposed activities, **INSERT NAME OF PARTNER AGENCY** will commit to providing the following:

- A representative to serve as an active member of the Advisory Board, attending (in-person or via telephone) at least four meetings per year
- Participate in the planning process and activities necessary to achieve the project's goals and objectives
- Review program feedback, providing input, guidance and suggestions for using information gathered to refine, strengthen and improve the project approach as appropriate
- Assist in promoting the project to the community
- Promote the program and provide qualified volunteers as appropriate
- Wherever possible, identifying and engaging additional community resources to support the initiative
- Offer feedback on programming, approaches and strategies to help ensure that the program achieves its intended goals and objectives
- Continue to support the initiative beyond the grant-funded period to ensure its sustainability

Thank you for this opportunity. We look forward to partnering with you in this crucial work, necessary to keep our students and staff safe while at school.

Regards,

NAME
TITLE