

1. These narrative application questions focus on how the applicant addresses the following funding priorities:

- Ability to address organized retail theft that places retail employees, the public, or both, at risk of physical injury.
- Ability to identify and address fencing networks connected to organized retail theft.
- Ability to identify and address the underlying causes of organized retail theft by focusing on individuals or groups who have committed or are at risk of committing organized retail theft.
- Evidence of collaboration with retailers or law enforcement agencies to support the reduction of organized retail theft in the jurisdiction served by the grant.
- Grant-funded operations designed to have a regional or statewide beneficial effect on the reduction of organized retail theft.
- Other criteria that the Commission chooses to include in the Organized Retail Theft Grant Program solicitation.

2. It is strongly recommended that applicants first read through all application questions and closely review the list of required documentation listed in the Grant Solicitation.

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**1. Describe the jurisdiction your program will serve if awarded funds.**

The Deschutes County/Bend Organized Retail Theft program will address organized retail theft (ORT) in Deschutes County, specifically focusing on the City of Bend.

Deschutes County has a population of over 208,000 and is demographically 0.6% Black, 1.1% American Indian & Alaskan Native, 1.4% Asian, 0.2% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 3.1% two or more races, 8.3% Hispanic or Latino, and 85.8% White – non-Hispanic. The county is 3,018 square miles and is defined as a Metro area, but half of the county zip codes are identified as rural areas by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy.

The City of Bend is the county seat, home to nearly half of the county's population, and is intersected by Hwy 97 a major North/South transportation corridor. Bend is also the location of the majority of the jurisdiction's retail stores (approximately 325 retailers). This not only makes Bend the primary shopping location for Bend and other Deschutes County residents but also for residents from all across Central Oregon. Given the higher population density and the higher number of retail stores, of which many are larger well-known national chains, we suspect Bend retailers are experiencing the most organized retail theft within our community.

**2. Describe the organized retail theft-related problem within the defined jurisdiction that your program seeks to address.**

Within the last 24 months (June 2022-May 2024) the Deschutes County District Attorney's Office (DCDA) has charged five organized retail theft (ORT) cases. Although that number may be comparatively small, it reflects a 150% increase in ORT cases from the prior four years (2018-2021).

The Bend Police Department (BPD) and the DCDA are in agreement that ORT is occurring in our community at a higher rate than the number of charged cases indicates. This is in part due to our jurisdiction lacking an ORT-dedicated team to investigate these crimes. Because we do not have strong relationships with the local retailers, we believe the retail stores are not reporting all of the thefts they are experiencing. In addition, we know that many of the larger retail stores are tracking shrinkage and loss, but since they are currently not sharing that information with law enforcement and prosecutors, we are missing out on opportunities to make connections between crimes.

Given the short timeframe of this grant opportunity and the current capacity at each agency, we would like to start our work in the area of ORT by specifically focusing on developing collaborative relationships between our local retailers and law enforcement. In particular, building relationships with the large-box stores in Bend that have the resources and personnel to assist with ORT data collection. Establishing these relationships will provide us with a better understanding of the scope of ORT crimes in our jurisdiction.

**3. How does your organization identify or intend to identify the underlying causes of organized retail theft by focusing on individuals or groups who have committed or are at risk of committing organized retail theft?**

The ORT team's plan to establish collaborative relationships with retailers is in part because we want to create a level of trust that will lead to data-sharing agreements, which will aid us in identifying the underlying causes of ORT in our jurisdiction.

Access to the information that retail stores collect on ORT offenders is a critical element in the development of our ORT program and stopping this crime. Currently, even if we had an ORT team with dedicated investigators at BPD, the lack of data from the retailers would result in us still not having a true understanding of the ORT environment in Bend. However, with access to comprehensive ORT information from multiple sources, we will increase our ability to identify who is involved in the crimes and gain a true understanding of what the underlying causes are within our jurisdiction, so we can take the most appropriate steps and interventions going forward.

**4. How does your organization identify or intend to identify and address fencing organizations connected to organized retail theft?**

While we believe that fencing is occurring, we will not be addressing this issue directly during this funding cycle. We anticipate that the information gleaned from our future retailer partners will help us learn more about the extent of this problem in Bend. The information collected during this funding period will then help us determine the best approach to addressing this challenge as we draft our ORT plan.

**5. Does your organization have existing infrastructure (i.e. personnel, equipment) with a primary focus of addressing organized retail theft?**

No

**6. How will your organization use grant funds to investigate, disrupt, deter or reduce organized retail theft within the program's jurisdiction?**

Our goals during this shortened grant period (10 months) are to: 1) Provide BPD & DCDA training in ORT and retailer relationship building, 2) Build relationships with local retailers that will lead to data-sharing agreements, and 3) Develop a comprehensive ORT crime plan for FY26. To do this we will be requesting funds to support the FTE of a part-time program manager to oversee the collaboration between DCDA and BPD, and the relationship building with the local retailers. The program manager will:

- a) Serve as the liaison between the agencies,
- b) Draft the DCDA/BPD MOU,
- c) Organize training opportunities and meetings with other communities to inform our plans for engaging with local retailers in Bend,
- d) Create materials for and conduct outreach to Bend's retail community,
- e) Coordinate and host the retailer meetings,
- f) Write the data-sharing agreements with selected retailers, and
- g) Oversee the development of the Bend ORT plan.

Funds will also be requested to cover travel to participate in a retail asset protection conference in Washington, DC in April 2025, attend meetings in other Oregon counties with ORT programs, and host and promote the retail meetings in Bend.

**7. How does your organization address or intend to address organized retail theft that places retail employees, the public, or both, at risk of physical injury?**

By hosting informational listening sessions with retailers, we will gain a better understanding of the risk our retailers and their employees are currently experiencing. This information will guide us as we develop our comprehensive ORT plan, which we will implement when we have a dedicated ORT team that includes BPD ORT investigators.

We suspect that our ORT plan will likely include training for retail staff to address safety issues, but may also include additional elements which we will glean from these retailer listening sessions. It is the purpose of this phase of our project to gain a better understanding of what our local retailers are experiencing so we can address those specific challenges directly and more effectively going forward.

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**8. How does your organization currently track or plan to track your efforts to reduce organized retail theft? What concrete measures (i.e. number of individuals charged, items recovered, value of items recovered) will you use?**

When we establish our ORT plan at the end of our project, we will outline specific measures to track our success based upon what we learn from our local retailers regarding the specific types of crimes they are experiencing and by asking which metrics are most valuable and important to them. Metrics may include: tracking cases charged, law enforcement follow-up and investigation of crimes, the quantity and value of merchandise recovered, and/or the perceived level of safety retailers' employees are experiencing. This qualitative and quantitative information will likely be collected through a regular survey sent out to retailers under the comprehensive ORT plan we will be developing.

We would also use the case management database systems at the DCDA and BPD to track the number of reports received from retailers, investigations started, as well as convictions that result from those investigations. This data would provide us with a solid picture of the problem within the community and would inform us on the progress being made from a law enforcement and prosecution standpoint. In addition, we would track the number of ORT crime victims and the value of the items stolen, to offer us with a perspective of how these crimes are impacting the community at-large.

**9. Does your organization have collaborative partnerships in place with local law enforcement?**

Yes

**a. If yes, describe these partnerships and explain how they will be utilized to support and measure the reduction of organized retail theft within the program's jurisdiction.**

The BPD and DCDA have frequently collaborated on community projects. Both agencies are part of LPSCC and have a strong working relationship. When funding is secured we will establish an MOU to outline the specific steps each agency will take to implement this grant project, which will begin our efforts to support and measure the reduction of organized retail theft in Bend.

The DCDA will take the lead on providing project and grant management. The DCDA and BPD will identify team members to assist with the project and attend program planning and training. Senior management, along with the selected ORT team members from each agency will participate in quarterly project meetings. The ORT team will also participate in the community retail meetings and in the discussions to prepare for and evaluate the feedback from the retailers. Key individuals from the team will engage in follow-up discussions with interested retailers to help establish the retail partnership data-sharing agreements. This work will occur over 10 months from September 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025.

Kathleen Meehan Coop will serve as the part-time program manager at DCDA. She has extensive experience with project management. Meehan Coop has been with DCDA for nine years overseeing special programs. She has an MBA and M.Ed., and a background in program development and grant management.

**10. Does your organization have collaborative partnerships in place with retailers, community groups, or associations impacted by organized retail theft?**

No

**11. Describe your program's specific and achievable time-based goals to reduce organized retail theft within your jurisdiction.**

By June 30, 2025, under a joint DCDA/BPD MOU, Deschutes County will have:

- a. An understanding of the current ORT environment within Bend
- b. Obtained additional ORT training
- c. Established data-sharing agreements with at least two larger retailers in Bend
- d. Developed a long-term plan to reduce ORT in our jurisdiction

To achieve these goals, the ORT team will meet with representatives from other Oregon jurisdictions that have successful ORT programs. We will host a series of informational listening sessions to hear directly from local retailers about what they have been experiencing and their ORT concerns. These meetings will show our commitment to stopping these serious crimes and provide an opportunity to discuss how we all might work together to address this problem.

Next, we will convene meetings with select retailers to learn more about the type of data they collect, discuss what information is needed to successfully investigate and prosecute these crimes, establish methods to share information, and outline what each partner can expect from each other through the data-sharing agreements.

Finally, the ORT team will draft an ORT plan based on what they have learned, which will include an outline of our jurisdiction's ORT priorities, tracking measures and how those measures will be collected and analyzed, how the underlying causes of ORT will be addressed, and what resources will be needed to successfully address ORT.

**DETAILED TIMELINE**

Quarterly Project Meetings - Sep 2024 and Jan & Mar 2025

Meetings with Other OR Communities - Oct-Dec 2024

Pre & Post Retail Planning Meetings - Nov & Dec 2024 and Mar & Apr 2025

Group Retailer Meetings - Jan, Feb & Mar 2025

Individual Retailer Meetings - Mar, Apr & May 2025

Retailer Data-Sharing Agreements - Apr, May & Jun 2025

Develop Bend ORT Plan - May & Jun 2025