



City Council Agenda Report

Meeting Date: May 13, 2025
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Approved By: Gabriel Engeland

Subject: Accept COPS Grant Funding

COUNCIL PRIORITY AREA

- ☒ Public Safety
- ☐ Business Communities
- ☐ Circulation Safety and Efficiency
- ☐ Environmental Sustainability
- ☐ Housing
- ☐ General Government

RECOMMENDATION

Accept grant funding from the Citizens Option for Public Safety/Supplemental Law Enforcement Services Fund (COPS/SLESF) and authorize revenue and allocate it to the Supplemental Law Enforcement Services Fund for Fiscal Year 2024–25.

FISCAL IMPACT

If Council approves the proposed recommendation, the Police Department will continue to receive a minimum of \$100,000 in annual SLESF funding. The allocation of SLESF funds will be maintained in the Supplemental Law Enforcement Fund, which is a special revenue fund, with corresponding revenue and expenditure line to manage the funds. This ensures the funds are appropriately tracked, with the revenue deposited into the COPS/SLESF grant program. The current grant program allocates an annual minimum of \$100,000 for front-line law enforcement operations.

After the initial disbursement of funds to participating jurisdictions, any additional growth funds are distributed by the County of Santa Clara to participating jurisdictions. The Los Altos Police Department has a remaining fund balance of \$118,723 in the Supplemental Law Enforcement Fund from previous years, which must be expended or encumbered within two fiscal years in accordance with the state requirement. In FY 2024–25, the Los Altos Police Department received \$145,968 in revenue in the Supplemental Law Enforcement Fund. Combined with the prior-year fund balance of \$118,723, this brings the total available resources in the fund to \$264,691 for FY24-25.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Not Applicable.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

Not Applicable.

BACKGROUND

In 1996, Assembly Bill 3229 established the Citizen's Option for Public Safety (COPS) Program's Supplemental Law Enforcement Services Fund (SLESF). The Legislature determined that there was a compelling need for additional resources at the local level for the purpose of ensuring public safety and established the COPS program to advance community policing in all counties. The COPS program awards non-competitive and non-matching grants to law enforcement agencies to fund frontline municipal police services. These funds are to be used to purchase officer safety and duty equipment, communications equipment and vehicles, among other things, that are all used directly and solely in the provision of frontline police services to the community.

Per Government Code §§ 30061-30063, cities are allocated a proportionate share of COPS funds by the California Department of Finance, through Santa Clara County. Proportionate shares are based on population estimates determined by the California Department of Finance.

This is not a fixed amount grant. Under the standard grant program allocation, the City of Los Altos is eligible to receive a minimum of \$100,000 annually. Each fall, the California Department of Finance estimates the allocation for each law enforcement agency in the county; the actual amount paid varies from the projection and is unknown until the payment cycle is complete. Monthly distributions are received via wire transfer and the City's Finance Department deposits these funds into a separate grant account. These distributions are not received in equal installments from month-to-month; therefore, spending over the course of the payment cycle can be unpredictable.

The COPS/SLESF grant does not have any application or other requirements; the monies are transferred to local entities through the County by operation of law (Government Code §§30061-30063) and are to be expended in accordance with the requirements of those code sections. The Government Code contains the following requirements for a recipient agency:

- The funds shall be used exclusively for front line law enforcement services
- The funds cannot be used to supplant other existing funding sources for general law enforcement services
- Moneys in the fund shall not be transferred to, or intermingled with, the moneys in any other fund in the City treasury, except to the extent necessary to facilitate the appropriation and expenditure of those transferred moneys
- The City Council shall approve the appropriation of COPS funds which authorizes that such funds can be expended by staff

- Once the appropriation of the grant funds is made, it cannot be subsequently altered by the City Council
- The funds cannot be used for a capital or construction project that does not directly support front line law enforcement services

DISCUSSION

Staff recommends the use of SLESF funds continue in the spirit of the COPS program. Staff recommends FY 2024/25 approval and allocation of SLESF funds to the Supplemental Law Enforcement Services Fund for Fiscal Year 2024–25. The department intends to utilize the funding for the following purposes:

- Duty rifles and accessories that need to be replaced (approved by Council during the annual AB 481 report)
- Ballistic shields and other protective equipment
- Training gear and systems, such as Virtual Reality training systems and equipment, Simunition gear (non-lethal force training using marking cartridges and protective equipment), that are used to enhance officers' skills and their ability to respond to various call types, including mental health calls, high risk calls, etc
- Technology and software, such as that used for digital forensics, Crime Analysis, or other uses that enhance operational efficiency, improve communication, and enable enhanced data analysis, crime deterrent measures, crisis negotiation or case management. The goal is to leverage equipment integration of modern technology that can improve public safety and overall service delivery.