



OLR RESEARCH REPORT

October 30, 2013

2013-R-0411

STATE AND FEDERAL SCHOOL SECURITY GRANTS

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You requested a summary of (1) the state school security grant program, including how the grants are determined and whether small towns are eligible, and (2) any comparable federal program open to small towns.

SUMMARY

Connecticut towns, regardless of size, are eligible for grants from the state school security program and at least two federal programs that we identified. As for the state grant program, so far \$5 million has been awarded to 36 school districts to reimburse them for a portion of the costs associated with security improvements proposed since the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy. Under the program, all towns and their school districts can apply for grants, which are administered by the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP). Grant amounts are based on town wealth with poorer towns receiving a larger percentage reimbursement, up to 80%, of the project costs than wealthier towns, which can be as low as 20% of the costs.

Federal grants come primarily from the U.S. Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The COPS program provides funding for police officers to work as school resource officers (i.e., officers specifically assigned to work at schools) and is available to all towns to apply. Periodically, DHS provides security grants to states, towns, and other

entities that can be used for a broad range of security purposes, including school security. Towns and school districts cannot apply directly for DHS grants, the local application must become part of the larger state application. In Connecticut that is through DESPP.

CONNECTICUT SCHOOL SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM

The Connecticut program was established under [PA 13-3](#), the major package of gun, violence prevention, and school safety legislation passed after the Sand Hook Elementary School tragedy. The act authorized up to \$15 million in state bond funds for the program and established a procedure for towns to apply for state reimbursement for a portion of the school security infrastructure projects and related equipment or training. The reimbursement procedure is modeled largely after the school construction reimbursement grant program.

The program reimburses towns for (1) the development or improvement of security infrastructure, based on the security assessment the act requires, and (2) (a) school personnel training in the operation and maintenance of the new or improved security structure or (b) the purchase of portable entrance security devices, including metal detector wands, screening machines, and related training.

Eligible infrastructure includes the installation of surveillance cameras, penetration resistant vestibules, ballistic glass, solid core doors, double-door access, computer-controlled electronic locks, entry door buzzer systems, scan card systems, panic alarms, or other systems.

Table 1 below shows the number of districts and the level of overall state and local funding.

Table 1: School Security Infrastructure Grants, Number of Towns, State Reimbursement

<i>Town or School District</i>	<i>Number of Schools Receiving Grants</i>	<i>State Reimbursement</i>	<i>Local Cost Share</i>	<i>Total Cost (state and local)</i>
36	169	\$4,990,418	\$3,921,435	\$8,911,853

Examples of small towns included in the initial award announcement include: Killingly, Ledyard, Montville, Plymouth, Sterling, and Winchester.

Application and Award Process

The grants, awarded by DESPP in consultation with the Department of Education (SDE) and the Department of Construction Services (DCS), were based on the criteria established in [PA 13-3](#). Local or regional boards of education apply to DESPP for funds on behalf of their town or member towns.

To receive a grant, a district must show that it (1) has conducted a uniform security assessment of its schools and any security infrastructure, (2) has an emergency plan at each of its schools developed with applicable state and local first responders, and (3) periodically conducts plan drills. The security assessment must be carried out under the supervision of the district's local law enforcement agency and use the Safe Schools Facilities Check List published by the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities.

Each municipality will be reimbursed between 20% and 80% according to town wealth as determined by state education law. It is the same wealth calculation used in the Education Cost Sharing and school construction programs.

If there is not enough money to reimburse every district for its full reimbursement percentage, the DESPP commissioner, in consultation with the DCS and education commissioners, must give first priority to applicants with schools they determine have the greatest need for security infrastructure based on the districts' school security assessments. Of the applicants with the greatest security infrastructure need, the commissioners must give first priority to applicants that have no security infrastructure at the time of the assessment and secondary priority to applicants from priority school districts.

DESPP received 111 applications for proposed infrastructure projects in 604 school buildings, consisting of the installation of surveillance cameras, bullet proof glass, electric locks, buzzer and card entry systems, and panic alarms. The next funding announcement is expected by December.

The law that created the program also created the School Safety Infrastructure Council (SSIC), which is required to develop school safety infrastructure standards for the school security grant program. The new standards, which are currently being developed, will not affect applications until after the standards are submitted to the DESPP and education commissioners, the School Building Projects Advisory Council,

and Public Safety and Education committees. SSIC has until January 1, 2014 to submit the standards. Future projects must meet the new standards to be eligible for reimbursement.

Full list of towns and state grants:

http://www.governor.ct.gov/malloy/lib/malloy/2013.09.18_2013_school_security_grant_program_phase_1.pdf

FEDERAL PROGRAMS

Federal grants come primarily from the Department of Justice's COPS program and Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

COPS

COPS has two types of funding programs for state, local and school safety; one addresses staffing and the other equipment. The first is the COPS Hiring Program, which provides funding for police officers to work as school resource officers and is available to all towns (as well as states), which must apply directly to the Justice Department. (It also provides funding for community policing who do not focus on schools.)

In September, COPS announced a round of grants for school resource officers that included a \$2.2 million grant to Bridgeport to hire 10 additional resource officers and \$125,000 to Farmington for one resource officer. (Hartford and Norwich were also given grants for general community policing.)

According to the announcement, the awards were made based on fiscal need, local crime rates, and community policing plans. Additional emphasis was given to applications aimed at developing school safety programs, including the hiring of school resource officers. The program provides salaries and benefits for officer hires over three years, with the local government making up the remaining portion.

The second program is COPS Secure Our Schools Program, which provides up to 50% of the total cost for local law enforcement or schools to install metal detectors, locks, lighting, and other anti-crime equipment in schools.

DHS

Periodically, DHS provides security grants to states for a broad range of security purposes, including schools. Unlike the COPS grants, towns and school districts must apply to DHS as part of a larger application from DESPP.

RELATED LINKS:

Justice COPS:

<http://cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=35>

Homeland Security School Safety:

<http://www.dhs.gov/school-safety>

To search for and find available federal grants visit:

<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/home.html>

JM:ts