



**Department:** Police  
**Cost Center:** 8001  
**For Agenda of:** 11/12/2024  
**Placement:** Consent  
**Estimated Time:** N/A

**FROM:** Rick Scott, Police Chief  
**Prepared By:** Fred Mickel, Deputy Chief

**SUBJECT:** FISCAL YEAR 2024-25 DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES GRANT AWARD

## RECOMMENDATION

1. Authorize the Police Department to accept the Fiscal Year 2024-25 Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services grant award in the amount of \$250,000, subject to the approval of the additional two positions and identification of funding for the City's match requirement in the 2025-27 Financial Plan; and
2. Authorize the City Manager or their designee to execute grant related documents.

## POLICY CONTEXT

The recommended actions are consistent with the City of San Luis Obispo's Financial Management Manual, Section 740 - Grant Management Policy. The policy states that Council must approve all grant applications in excess of \$5,000 and delegates receipt and contract execution to the City Manager.

## DISCUSSION

On June 4, 2024, the City Council approved staff's recommendation to submit a grant application to the Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), in the amount of \$250,000, with a City match amount of approximately \$558,000. In the Council Agenda Report from June 4, 2024, which authorized the grant application, staff committed to returning to Council if the grant was awarded to seek further approvals.

On September 30, 2024, the COPS Office notified the department that the grant application was approved. If Council authorizes staff to accept the grant, the department will return to Council during the budget planning process to request the addition of two new full time police officer positions and the grant matching funds. The deadline to accept the grant award is November 14, 2024; however, the department can postpone using the grant funds until FY 2026-27 (the latest the funds can be used); there is also an option to withdraw completely from the grant after acceptance. This timeline should be sufficient for staff's budgetary

requests and Council's consideration during the budget planning process. The proposed additions are also supported by the department staffing study, which is in draft form now and will be finalized and is expected to be presented to Council in January 2025, ensuring alignment with identified staffing needs. This approach ensures that Council will have all the necessary information before approving the use of grant funds and associated staffing changes. If approved, the two regular full-time equivalent (FTE) police officers will be assigned to patrol but associated with the Community Action Team with a selected grant focus area of police-based response to persons in crisis.

The COPS Hiring Program will cover up to 75% of the entry-level salary and benefits for each approved position for a period of three (3) years (within a 5-year period of performance). There is a minimum cost share of 25% and the maximum federal share per position is \$125,000 over the 3-year period (not per year, spanning the 3-year period). Agencies must retain each funded position for a minimum of 12 months following the 3-years of funding. Absorbing the positions through attrition is not allowed, and the grant-funded positions must be retained and funded through the City's General Fund.

Staff is recommending that the grant be accepted by the deadline with the understanding that the two additional regular FTE police officer positions (which would be net new) and funding sources for the City's match would need to be evaluated and addressed as part of the 2025-27 Financial Plan. Staff would not begin recruitment for the new positions, nor draw down or request payment of the grant funding from the Department of Justice unless the two additional positions and the City match funding are approved as part of the financial plan process. Should the positions and/or the City match funding not be approved in the 2025-27 Financial Plan, staff will terminate the grant agreement without any monetary penalty to the City.

### **Staffing Study**

Currently, the department is working with a consultant to conduct a department-wide staffing study. A draft report of the staffing study has been completed and is on track to be finalized by December 2024. The draft findings recommend a need to add a minimum of six sworn patrol staff positions to better meet operational demands. Staff anticipates that the final report will confirm this recommendation and provide further insights supported by department-specific data analysis, industry best practices, and community desires and expectations for service. The Police Department anticipates presenting this budget item along with the final staffing study report, its findings, and recommendations to the City Council by January 2025, offering insights into optimal staffing to enhance departmental efficiency and community service.

### **Staffing Levels & Vacancy Rates**

Police vacancy rates are a widespread challenge, driven by factors like high turnover, retirements, and a competitive job market. Law enforcement typically sees annual turnover rates of 5-10%.

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Overall, the department's staffing levels have minimally changed in the past two decades. The department's sworn staffing levels in FY 2024-25 remain the same as twenty years ago. There are 61 total sworn positions, these positions include police officer, sergeant, lieutenant, deputy chief, and chief of police. Although the department has 46 approved full time equivalent police officer positions, it has been challenging to maintain a constant level of staffing (fully staffed). Since 2021, the department has experienced an average 6% vacancy rate for sworn positions.

In FY 2023-24, the department hired six police officers; turnover was due to retirements, officers moving out of the area, and some not successfully passing the field training program. A newly hired officer can either be a lateral officer (coming from another agency) or a cadet. Both take considerable amounts of time to fully transition into an independent officer who can fill shifts on their own. Typical lateral hires can take anywhere from 6.5 to 7.5 months with the background process and field training completion. Cadet training will be longer due to the six-month police academy. This long training period means even when vacancies are being filled, it takes significant time for recruits to become operational and provide needed relief to field teams.

The current level of sworn staffing in the police department is insufficient to meet the City's growing needs for effective public safety and community policing. Focusing solely on filling current vacancies misses the critical need for a strategic approach to long-term staffing, ensuring the department can sustainably address rising demands and respond to future challenges. With the assistance of this grant, adding FTEs helps plan for future turnover, maintain adequate service levels, and meet increasing demands. A balanced approach addresses both vacancies and staffing growth to ensure consistent public safety, consistent with the initial findings and recommendations in the anticipated department's staffing study.

### Overtime

When the department has vacant officer positions, overtime is required to meet minimum staffing levels. The chart below reflects overtime specific to shift coverage for patrol.

<b>Shift Coverage Overtime – Patrol</b>			
	<b>FY 21-22</b>	<b>FY 22-23</b>	<b>FY 23-24</b>
Shift Coverage Hours	5,371	4,829	4,894

In FY 2023-24, overtime related to covering patrol shifts alone equated to approximately \$518,000. One officer at mid-step salary and benefits is approximately \$150,000. Total overtime expended (related to covering shifts) equates to at least 3.50 regular full time police officers.

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By adding two additional positions, the department will reduce the need for overtime to cover shifts, leading to savings in overtime expenses. This increased staffing will help balance workloads, allowing the department to manage regular patrol shifts more effectively and potentially reducing overtime costs by up to two-thirds of what was previously expended. In addition, this staffing increase will immediately begin to reduce officer burnout, improve morale, while also improving officer safety and wellness, thus meeting several key objectives of the department's adopted Strategic Plan.

### Public Engagement

This item is on the agenda for the November 12, 2024 City Council meeting and will follow all required postings and notifications. The public may have an opportunity to comment on this item at or before the meeting. The Police Advisory Council (PAC) and Police Roundtable advisory bodies to the department have been notified of the requested staffing increase and overall, they are in support of the increase in staffing. Additionally, they have been provided an opportunity to further engage with the office of the Chief of Police or the City Council.

### CONCURRENCE

The Directors of Finance and Human Resources concur with staff's recommendations.

The Police Department has met and conferred with the Police Officers Association (POA) in accordance with Article 43 of the contract regarding staffing changes, and the POA supports the staff's recommendations.

### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The California Environmental Quality Act does not apply to the recommended action in this report because the action does not constitute a "Project" under CEQA Guidelines Section 15378.

### FISCAL IMPACT

Budgeted: No

Budget Year: 2024-29

Funding Identified: No

### Fiscal Analysis:

Funding Sources	Total Budget (Grant Award)	Current Funding Request	Remaining Balance	Annual Ongoing Cost
Federal Funds COPS Grant Award	250,000			
General Fund (City Match)	0	0		See chart below

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The grant requires a minimum 25% cash match, and the grantee must assume a progressively larger share of the cost each year.

The COPS grant program will support three years of funding within a 5-year period of performance (to accommodate the time needed for recruitment and hiring).

Agencies must retain each funded position for a minimum of twelve months following the three years of funding. The hired positions should be added to the agency's budget in addition to previously approved staffing levels. Absorbing these positions through attrition does not meet the retention requirements.

The chart below outlines estimated General Fund obligations by Fiscal Year and expected grant funding over the 5-year performance period for two police officers.

### SALARY & BENEFITS – TWO POLICE OFFICERS

	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	Total		YEAR 4	YEAR 5
COPS Grant	\$88,873	\$81,493	\$79,634	\$250,000		\$0	\$0
General Fund	\$178,507	\$185,886	\$187,745	\$552,138		\$335,404	\$351,134
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$267,380</i>	<i>\$267,379</i>	<i>\$267,379</i>	<i>\$802,138</i>		<i>\$335,404</i>	<i>\$351,134</i>

*\*Salary figures do not include contractual MOU adjustments which will be up for renegotiation in 2026.*

The grant period ends on September 30, 2029, and in order to meet the 3-year funding requirement to hire these positions, the following plan has been developed. Should Council authorize acceptance of the grant, staff recommends that the positions be considered for addition as part of the 2025-27 Financial Plan and that recruitment begin, at the earliest, in late summer 2025. However, if funding cannot be identified by the 2025-27 Financial Plan, the City would withdraw from the grant without penalty. Grant funds are not awarded up front; claims are submitted for reimbursement as costs are incurred.

The chart below reflects three scenarios for hiring options based on year (and the grant end date). Note that the amounts below reflect current costs for two Police Officer positions and do not factor in labor cost increases over the term of the grant.

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<b>City FY</b>	<b>FY 24 - 25</b>	<b>FY 25-26</b>	<b>FY 25-26</b>	<b>FY 26-27</b>	<b>FY 26-27</b>	<b>FY 27-28</b>	<b>FY 27-28</b>	<b>FY 28-29</b>	<b>FY 28-29</b>	<b>FY 29-30</b>		
<b>Federal FY</b>	10/1/24 - 9/30/25		10/1/25 - 9/30/26		10/1/26 - 9/30/27		10/1/2027 - 9/30/28		10/1/28 - 9/30/29			
	Yr 1		Yr 2		Yr 3		Yr 4		Yr 5			
<b>Scenario 1</b>	Hire in FY 24-25 (3 years of grant funding)											
<i>Grant</i>	88,873		81,493		79,634							
<i>City</i>	178,507		185,886		187,745							
<b>Scenario 2</b>			Hire in FY 25-26 (3 years of grant funding)									
<i>Grant</i>			88,873		81,493		79,634					
<i>City</i>			178,507		185,886		187,745					
<b>Scenario 3</b>					Hire in FY 26-27 (3 years of grant funding)							
<i>Grant</i>					88,873		81,493		79,634			
<i>City</i>					178,507		185,886		187,745			

**ALTERNATIVES**

***Decline Grant Award.*** The COPS grant award may be declined without any penalties to the City. Should this alternative be chosen, staff anticipates requesting authorization to submit a similar application in the future, following completion of the staffing study and approval to add new positions to the department as part of the upcoming Financial Plan process. It should be noted, however, that the COPS grant is a competitive process and may not be awarded in the future or at a time that would offset the immediate costs of adding positions that are needed for the Department.

**ATTACHMENTS**

None