How to Get a Grant to Promote Safety and Security at Your K-12 School

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Introduction

Creating a safe learning environment for students and educators is a top priority and vital to academic success in our nation's K–12 schools. The U.S. government recognizes the need to support state and local leaders and has taken an active role in this effort by offering grants to promote safety. This eBook outlines the grant application process and how technology plays an important role in streamlining communication and improving security measures.

"Our nation's schools must be safe places to learn, where students feel connected and supported. These grants allow local leaders to tailor their approach to school safety and mental health in ways that meet their students' individual needs and their particular school's unique challenges."

-Betsy DeVos, U.S. Secretary of Education

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STOP School Violence Program Grants

In 2018, Congress enacted the **STOP School Violence Act**, authorizing nearly $1 billion in U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) school safety and security grants over the next decade. One-third of the funding has been allocated to security equipment and technology-related applications under the School Violence Prevention Program (SVPP).

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) created the STOP School Violence Threat Assessment and Technology Reporting Program to improve security measures at schools through evidence-based strategies and programs. The Comprehensive School Safety Initiative (CSSI) was launched by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), DOJ's research and development agency. The initiative focuses on developing knowledge and strategies that can be applied to promote increased safety in K–12 schools throughout the country.

BJA manages the grant program and oversees the distribution of awards. They support local and state efforts to prevent and reduce school violence. These are BJA's objectives:

- Provide funding for school violence prevention, training, anonymous reporting systems, threat assessment, and crisis intervention.
- Seek applications specifically that address the development and operation of school threat assessment and crisis intervention teams and the development of technology for local or regional anonymous reporting systems.
- Help address growing concerns with inconsistent implementation of modern, effective security infrastructure nationwide, particularly since the Sandy Hook Elementary attack in 2012. After this tragic event, it was determined that a lack of basic security measures played an enabling role.

What Can a Grant Be Used for?

Under the SVPP program, BJA awards school safety grants that can be used to:

- Train and educate teachers, administrators, and students on the prevention of violence.
- Purchase and install technology that expedites local law enforcement notification during an emergency.
- Install physical security measures, such as metal detectors, locks, enhanced lighting, and surveillance.
- Develop anonymous reporting systems for violent threats, including mobile apps, hotlines, and websites.
- Create threat assessment procedures and intervention teams to coordinate with law enforcement.
- Support measures that improve training, threat assessment reporting, and violence prevention.

In your grant submission, you may request funding for one or more of the purposes listed above. Keep in mind, the more thorough your application, the better your chances for success.

Who Is Eligible for a Grant?

All states, units of local government, such as cities, counties, and townships; federally recognized Indian tribes; and public agencies, including police departments, sheriffs' departments, and school districts are eligible to apply for the SVPP grants. Award recipients must use the funds to improve the safety and security of students at K–12, primary and secondary schools.

Applicants must demonstrate an evidence-based, comprehensive approach to safety at their schools according to best practices that validate the use of technology and equipment needs.
Some states, such as Indiana, have created specific guidelines and recommendations. The **2018 Indiana School Safety Recommendations** report identifies opportunities to enhance technology capabilities by developing a school safety technology hub. This centralized repository of resources helps educators streamline information sharing. Indiana's grant funds can also be used to employ Student Resource Officers (SROs) and to purchase technology and equipment that expedites communications with law enforcement and emergency personnel.

While some states haven't yet outlined school safety guidelines, **two-way communication** in classrooms is a common security recommendation that ensures teachers and students can call for help in emergency situations.

Why Technology is Critical to K–12 School Safety

Government agencies have explored the role of technology in school safety and how it can help prevent and respond to school violence. **A study sponsored by the NIJ** revealed two of the most pressing issues: the enablement of two-way communication between teachers and emergency responders, and the integration of fragmented and outdated school safety policies, procedures, and training for school administrators and parents.

Strong cell coverage is essential to effective two-way communication. Teachers and students inside your school must be able to connect with emergency responders outside of the facility. Here are some of the challenges with indoor cell signal reception:

- Many schools are constructed of thick, signal-blocking concrete and brick, which prevents a cell signal from entering or leaving the building.
- Weak or nonexistent cell signals can also be problematic in classrooms located in a basement or lower level.
- Poor reception makes it nearly impossible to communicate critical information via phone calls or texts messages from inside a school.

For every one of these circumstances, WilsonPro offers a viable solution. For example, we can amplify an existing outside cell signal and push it to indoor areas where the signal is weak. Our goal is to help you prioritize your school's needs and design a customized solution that best satisfies your coverage requirements.

Increase School Safety with a Cellular Signal Amplifier

Installing an amplifier (sometimes known as a repeater) system is the solution for inadequate cell signals inside K–12 schools. **WilsonPro cellular signal amplifiers** improve call quality and data reception, which ensures reliable communication can take place. This technology boosts signals for all cell carriers, devices, and networks, ensuring strong user connectivity from inside the building. A WilsonPro amplifier system can detect and collect signals from distant cell towers that are much more faint than those recognized by a mobile device.

Installation of a WilsonPro signal amplifier can take as little as a few days to weeks depending on the size of your school and the coverage needed.

This technology is a cost-effective solution compared to the multimillion-dollar expense of an Active DAS system with complex fiber optic networks, along with the need for approval by all affected carriers. Even when carrier approval is granted, the process can take years to complete. A stronger cell connection also provides teachers and administrators the convenience of communicating with family, friends, and children's parents.

Cell signal boosters and other technology expedite communication with emergency responders. According to the BJA grant program requirements, schools can use funds to purchase and install this equipment to improve the safety of their teachers and students.

Success Stories

In 2018, DOJ reviewed 202 SVPP grant applications from 44 states. **Ninety-one grants**, totaling nearly $25 million, were awarded to states, counties, cities, and Indian tribes, benefiting three million students in more than 5,000 schools. The most common elements of these projects were camera systems; security reinforcement with access controls, doors, and locks; and technology including panic alarms, radios, and repeaters.

The Green Bay School District received a $835,092 school safety grant for security cameras, a video storage server, portable radios, visitor management software, a public address system, panic buttons, emergency management software, training, and 3M™ Safety and Security Window Film.

The Tennessee Department of Education awarded $35 million to benefit school districts across the state. The award included the one-time School Safety and Security grant for $25 million and the recurring Safe School grant for $10 million to support ongoing safety programs. Security measures included upgraded door locks, enhanced visitor screening, and shatter-resistant glass. Some districts used the funding to hire school counselors and child psychologists.

Students and educators in Virginia schools were awarded $6 million in grants by **the Virginia Department of Education** for the purchase and installation of security equipment. Video monitoring, internal communications and visitor identification systems, and other security upgrades were installed in 340 schools throughout the state. To learn more about grant opportunities, reach out to the department of education in your state.

Tips to Apply for a Grant

The SVPP grant solicitation for 2020 has not yet been released, but as you prepare to apply for funding, please note that grant applications should be submitted at least 72 hours prior to the deadline listed in the solicitation. This will allow for time to receive validation messages and address potential errors on your application. The approval process is typically three months. SVPP program documents for 2020 will be posted on the **DOJ program documents page** when the grant is announced. For more information, visit the **DOJ SVPP web page.** To streamline the grant application process, review the following tips:

- Start your grant application process now for 2020.
- **Register your account today.** This can take 10–14 business days. In the pre-application process, you will need to:
  - Create an **organization applicant profile**.
  - Enter a Data Universal Numeric System (DUNS) number. If your school doesn't have a DUNS number, you can request one from **Dun & Bradstreet.**
  - Register in the System for Award
  - Management (SAM) database.
  - Designate an authorized organization representative and obtain a Grants.gov username and password.

- Read the solicitation, which outlines the basic requirements of the grant application. When the opportunity is released, the announcement and solicitation will be posted on **BJA's funding page**.
- Develop proposal ideas for your school's project.
- Create a plan that includes a collaborative approach for writing the grant. Consider the option of hiring a grant writer.
- Develop a budget that includes allowable expenses. Use the **Budget Detail Worksheet** to help guide you.
- Create a proposal that includes the goal of your project, timeframe, results evaluation, and a preliminary budget.
- Review grant criteria and how scoring is evaluated.
- Solicit community support. Letters endorsing the project will impact the grant review process.
- Review the BJA webinar: Submitting Your Application: **Avoid These Common Mistakes.**
- Submit your application 72 hours prior to the deadline.

Additional Resources

Prior to the release of the 2020 SVPP grant solicitation, there are resources available to help you prepare:

- Subscribe to the **NewsFromBJA** newsletter and receive information about new funding opportunities, tools and resources, and BJA programs and initiatives.
- **Sign up for email notifications** and stay up-to-date with new information from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS).

- **Register for BJA webinars** and learn how to ensure a successful grant application process.
- Contact your state policy advisor listed on pages 50–52 in the **BJA Guide to Grants** for more information on available funding and deadlines.
- Review the Office of Justice Programs **Grant 101 Toolkit.**
- **Contact Grants.gov** Applicant Support: 800-518-4726 or 606-545-5035 (international) or **email.**

Conclusion

Safety is critical in every K–12 learning environment. An all-inclusive, ongoing protection strategy is the foundation for emergency preparedness. As outlined in this eBook, technology plays an important role in keeping your students and educators safe. We are ready to help you implement effective safety measures, centered on enhanced two-way cellular communication and tailored to work for your school.

Take the next step, **contact WilsonPro today** for a free consultation regarding cell phone signal amplifiers (repeaters) and safety for your K–12 school.

Take the next step here to ensure your school
stays connected: **wilsonpro.com/contactus**

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