

**FY 2023 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant
Proposal Narrative**

Organization: City of Edinburg
Department: Edinburg Police Department
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Solicitation Name: FY 2023 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant
Project Title: Portable Radios Project
Project Location: City of Edinburg, Texas
Funding Request: \$26,632

Description of the Issue

Identify the unit of local government’s strategy/funding priorities for the FY 2023 JAG funds, the subaward process (if applicable, including disparates) and timeline, any progress or challenges, and a description of the programs to be funded over the 4-year grant period.

The intent of this grant project is to equip the City of Edinburg Police Department (EPD) with four portable radios and associated accessories. Portable radios are mission-critical to officers and their safety by providing officers with a lifeline to communicate with dispatchers, other officers and other agencies. A radio could potentially be the difference between life and death as an officer may need to call for backup in an emergency situation. Without a radio, an officer is unable to respond to calls and provide or receive vital information about the incident. Every officer, animal control officer and jailer is assigned a radio and uses it daily to carry out EPD’s mission of making the City of Edinburg a safer place. Accordingly, this project’s goal is to upgrade EPD’s radios so all officers can use the same model, improving communications and officer safety.

EPD needs the requested portable radios to replace older model portable radios that are at the end of their useful life. These older radios are more than 10 years old. When they break, they are solely used for parts because they are too out-of-date to repair. When a radio breaks down and does not transmit, an officer’s duty is disrupted because he or she must come back to the Police

Department instead of staying out in the field, serving and protecting the lives and property of the citizens. Additionally, the older radios do not support the encryption feature that keeps the EPD's transmission secure from unauthorized scanners/listeners that leak confidential information to the public.

If awarded, this grant request will address EPD's capability gaps by replacing four portable radios and improving EPD's communications and enhancing officer safety radio procedures. Due to limited resources, there is no EPD funding available to purchase the requested portable radios and accessories with local funding. The requested radios (APX6000 700/800 MODEL 2.5 PORTABLE) will be outfitted with accessories such as a remote speaker microphone, charger, upgraded batteries, carry accessory case, etc. Compared to the older models EPD aims to phase out, this newer radio model has better features: the battery life is longer; it is more durable for the outside elements and normal wear-and-tear; and it has a stronger frequency so officers do not hear any static background noise in the background. The anticipated lifespan for the radios is approximately 15 years. Additionally, since the radios will be newer models, the anticipated maintenance costs are minimal and will be absorbed by EPD's operating budget.

Edinburg is a community of limited resources, and its accelerated population growth has burdened City operations. Basic infrastructure and capital improvement projects are current priorities. Without grant funding, EPD is unable to outfit officers with the mission-critical portable radios needed to safely and effectively carry out duties. This project will help sustain and improve EPD's capability to communicate, particularly when responding to lifesaving, time-sensitive calls.

The City of Edinburg is centrally located in the four-county region of the Rio Grande Valley in the southernmost tip of Texas and the United States. Less than 15 miles from the U.S.-Mexico

border and running along 13 miles of Interstate 69C, a major regional corridor, Edinburg is one of Texas' most rapidly-growing regions. It anchors the Edinburg-McAllen-Mission metro area, the fifth largest MSA in Texas and is the county seat of Hidalgo County. From 2010 to 2021, Edinburg's population increased 33% from 77,100 in 2010 to 102,483 in 2021, more than triple the US' population growth rate (7%) for the same period (U.S. Census Bureau).

Given its border proximity, transportation infrastructure and accelerated growth, Edinburg is a prime hub for crime. The City is known as the "Gateway City" because of its gateway to Interstate 69, formerly known as U.S. Highway 281 and the NAFTA highway. Additionally, as per the Texas Department of Public Safety's 2018 Texas Gang Threat Assessment, Hidalgo County is among the second highest areas of assessed gang activity in Texas. Gangs with an active presence in Hidalgo County include but are not limited to Tier 1-ranked gangs, such as the Tango Blast and Tango Cliques, Texas Mexican Mafia, and Mara Salvatrucha; and Tier 2-ranked gangs such as the Texas Syndicate and Texas Chicano Brotherhood.

Financially, EPD is under tremendous budget constraints. EPD's resources have not grown in proportion to the City's population. Consequently, Edinburg's depressed economy has affected the City's budget. Edinburg's poverty rate is 23.3%, more than double the national rate of 11.4 percent, and almost 10 points above Texas' (14.2%). (U.S. Census Bureau). These lagging economic indicators demonstrate Edinburg's strained local funding and critical need for the requested equipment.

The City of Edinburg will comply with the grant's period of performance, as with past USDOJ grant awards that have been implemented successfully and within the performance periods. Additionally, the City of Edinburg will utilize grant funding directly; no subawards will be awarded.

Project Design and Implementation

Describe the unit of local government’s process, if any, for engaging stakeholders from across the justice continuum and how that input informs priorities. This should include a description of how local communities are engaged in the planning process, how state and local planning efforts are coordinated, and the challenges faced in coordination. The applicant should identify the stakeholders representing each program area who are participating in the strategic planning process, the gaps in the state's needed resources for criminal justice purposes, plans to improve the administration of the criminal justice system, and how JAG funds will be coordinated with state and related justice funds.

The Edinburg Police Department’s mission statement is “to serve and protect the lives and property of all citizens of the United States, Texas and the City of Edinburg. To make the City of Edinburg a safer place to live by deterring crime, conducting investigations and apprehending offenders.” In an effort to engage stakeholders and gather their input, the City of Edinburg conducted the Edinburg 2040 initiative in 2022, a community-driven, planning initiative to develop a long-range vision for the City and gather input on City needs, highlighting the City’s commitment to improving services and amenities. According to survey respondents, EPD was highly rated but identified Crime Prevention/Public Safety as one of the top 5 priorities for the City to focus on. This project will help sustain and improve EPD’s capability to communicate, particularly when responding to lifesaving, time-sensitive calls.

A Notice of Public Hearing and Public Comment Solicitation was posted at various City locations on August 9, 2023. The meeting was set to take place on August 16, 2023 to provide citizens with a platform to discuss the grant application and details. The FY 2023 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant item was presented to City Council for approval on August 15, 2023.

This year's requested funds for portable radios builds on Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grants funds from previous years that provided EPD with portable radios, as EPD has identified a critical need for this equipment.

Capabilities and Competencies

Describe any additional strategic planning/coordination efforts in which the units of local government participate with other criminal justice entities within the local jurisdiction and/or state. Please provide an overview of any evidence-informed programs that have been implemented successfully and how those programs might inform implementation of strategic plan priorities.

EPD maintains working relationships and partners with federal, state, regional and local law enforcement agencies including the Edinburg Consolidated Independent School District PD, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley PD, South Texas College PD, McAllen PD, Pharr PD, San Juan PD, Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office, a multijurisdictional South Texas Auto Theft Enforcement Task Force, Texas Department of Public Safety, Border Patrol, Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Homeland Security Investigations, etc.

If awarded, radios will be programmed both locally and regionally. In the event of a major incident or mass casualty, EPD can request assistance from or respond to requests from the regional system. For example, if EPD needs to request assistance from the Texas Department of Public Safety, EPD can directly speak agency-to-agency with another law enforcement agency.

The City has demonstrated its capacity to secure funding for a comparable project in the past. In the FY 2022 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant cycle, the City sought support for the acquisition of four portable radios and associated accessories, leading to the successful replacement of outdated communication equipment used by law enforcement personnel. The enhancement in communication efficacy has led to this year's request for an additional set of

four portable radios and associated accessories, intended to further the ongoing initiative of replacing outdated equipment being used by EPD.

Plan for Collecting the Data Required for this Solicitation's Performance Measures

The application should demonstrate the applicant's understanding of the performance data reporting requirements for this grant program and detail how the applicant will gather the required data should it receive funding.

EPD implements local, state and federal grants, and is ready to implement this grant and meet all terms and conditions if awarded. Additionally, EPD is assisted by the City's Grants Administration Department and is prepared to resolve any major problems that may arise during the project's lifespan. Systems and controls are in place for the receipt and expenditure of federal, state and foundation grant funding, as well as meeting programmatic and financial reporting requirements.