AN ACT Relating to creating a partnership model that facilitates community engagement with law enforcement; adding a new section to chapter 43.330 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an expiration date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. The legislature finds that community engagement is a foundational principle of successful community policing practices. When individuals and neighborhood groups are encouraged to partner with law enforcement, a powerful alliance can be built on mutual trust and respect and mitigate polarization between police departments and community groups. A successful community-police partnership leads to the achievement of shared goals of improving safety and quality of life and ensuring that public safety services are tailored to the needs of local communities.

The legislature recognizes current efforts in Washington to mobilize communities to insist on equitable and accountable practices that will result in community participation in public safety efforts as well as establish cooperative lines of communication between civilians and law enforcement. Laudable community engagement models such as the safe streets campaign in Pierce county, safe Yakima in Yakima county, and the Okanogan county community coalition are...
recognized to mitigate crime trends by engaging the community and law enforcement in cooperative efforts to improve public safety.

The department of commerce intends to foster community engagement with law enforcement officers through the creation of a community engagement project in 15 communities across the state of Washington with a mix of urban, rural, and suburban areas to facilitate community-law enforcement partnerships and improve police-community relations. The department will implement a project evaluation to measure and examine the impact of local initiatives on community engagement, neighborhood safety, and positive community-police relations.

The funded projects will facilitate the empowerment of communities to engage in crime prevention efforts through neighborhood organizing, law enforcement-community partnerships, youth mobilization, and business engagement.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. A new section is added to chapter 43.330 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, a project is created in the department to foster community engagement through neighborhood organizing, law enforcement-community partnerships, youth mobilization, and business engagement. The department shall administer the project. The project must include 12 to 15 grant awards in those counties that have demonstrated their commitment to programs that promote community engagement in public safety including the following counties: Spokane, Pierce, King, Okanogan, Yakima, Cowlitz, Clark, Chelan-Douglas, Walla-Walla, Benton-Franklin, Grant, and Snohomish.

(2) The department shall adopt policies and procedures necessary to administer the project including: (a) An application process; (b) disbursement of the grant award to selected applicants; (c) tracking compliance and proper use of funds; and (d) measuring outcomes.

(3) Eligible applicants must:

(a) Be a public agency or nongovernmental organization, that is not a law enforcement agency;

(b) Have demonstrated experience with community engagement initiatives that impact public safety;

(c) Have community engagement;

(d) Have established or be willing to establish a coordinated effort with committed partners, which must include law enforcement
and organizations committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion of community members, including organizations whose leadership specifically reflects the communities most impacted by racism; and

(e) Have established priorities, policies, and measurable goals in compliance with the requirements of the project as provided in subsection (4) of this section.

(4) The grant recipient shall:

(a) Lead and facilitate neighborhood organizing initiatives, including:

(i) Empowering community members with tools, skills, confidence, and connections to identify, eradicate, and prevent illegal activity;

(ii) Making neighborhood improvements to deter future criminal activity; and

(iii) Educating community members regarding how to connect with city, county, and law enforcement resources;

(b) Build substantive law enforcement-community partnerships, including:

(i) Building trust between community members and law enforcement by facilitating purposeful antiracist practices and the development of policies that lead to equal treatment under the law;

(ii) Establishing clear expectations for law enforcement to be competent to practice fair and equitable treatment including facilitating dialogue between law enforcement and community members to increase understanding of the impact of historical racist practices and current conflicts;

(iii) Community members regularly informing law enforcement, through presentations, workshops, or forums, on community perceptions of law enforcement and public safety issues;

(iv) Educating community members on the role and function of law enforcement in the community;

(v) Clarifying expectations of law enforcement and of the role of the community in crime prevention;

(vi) Educating community members on the best practices for reporting emergency and nonemergency activities;

(vii) Recognizing community members for effective engagement and community leadership; and

(viii) Recognizing law enforcement officials for efforts to engage underrepresented communities, improve community engagement and empowerment, and reform law enforcement practices;
(c) Mobilize youth to partner with neighborhood groups and law enforcement to prevent violence by:

(i) Helping them develop knowledge and skills to serve as leaders in their communities;

(ii) Focusing on prevention of violence and substance abuse; and

(iii) Empowering youth to bring their voice to community issues that impact healthy police-community relations;

(d) Engage businesses to help prevent crimes, such as vandalism and burglaries, through safety training and other prevention initiatives;

(e) Provide training and technical assistance on how to implement community engagement, improving law enforcement and community partnership, youth engagement, and business engagement;

(f) Identify and maintain consistent, experienced, and committed leadership for managing the grant, including an administrator who acts as an available point of contact with the department; and

(g) Collect and report data and information required by the department.

(5) The department shall, in consultation with the Washington state institute for public policy, develop reporting guidelines for the grant recipient in order to measure whether the safe streets pilot project had an impact on crime rates and community engagement with, and perceptions of, law enforcement. The department shall submit a preliminary report to the legislature with details on the selected grant recipients and the reporting guidelines by January 1, 2022. The department shall submit a final report on the safe streets pilot project, including an analysis of the reported data required under this subsection, by December 1, 2023.

(6) This section expires January 1, 2024.