

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5561

As of February 7, 2023

Title: An act relating to extending the expiration date of the law enforcement community engagement grant project.

Brief Description: Extending the expiration date of the law enforcement community engagement grant project.

Sponsors: Senators Conway, Pedersen, Lovick, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Lias, Saldaña, Valdez and Wagoner.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 2/07/23.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends the expiration date one year from January 1, 2024, to January 1, 2025, for the Law Enforcement Community Engagement Grant Project.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Staff: Tim Ford (786-7423)

Background: Community Engagement Grant Project. In 2021, the Legislature created the Community Engagement Grant Project within the Department of Commerce (Commerce). The grant project's purpose is to foster community engagement through neighborhood organizing, law enforcement and community partnerships, youth mobilization, and business engagement. The project includes 12 to 15 grant awards in those counties that have demonstrated their commitment to programs that promote community engagement in public safety including Spokane, Pierce, King, Okanogan, Yakima, Cowlitz, Clark, Chelan-Douglas, Walla Walla, Benton-Franklin, Grant, and Snohomish counties.

Commerce adopted policies and procedures to administer the project, including an

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application process, disbursement of grant funds to selected applicants, tracking compliance and proper use of funds, and measuring outcomes.

Project Eligibility. Applicants for the grant program must:

- be a public agency or nongovernmental agency that is not a law enforcement agency serving a city or county with a population in excess of 10,000 people;
- have demonstrated experience with community engagement initiatives that impact public safety;
- have community engagement and 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; and
- have established priorities, policies, and measurable goals in compliance with the requirements of the project.

Grant Participants. Activities for grant participants are outlined. Among other requirements, a successful participant must:

- build substantive law enforcement and community partnerships;
- mobilize youth to partner with neighborhood groups and law enforcement to prevent violence;
- engage businesses to help prevent crimes through safety training and other prevention initiatives; and
- collect and report data and information required by Commerce.

Reporting. Commerce worked with the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to develop reporting guidelines for the grant recipient to measure whether the program had an impact on crime rates and community engagement with law enforcement. A preliminary report was to be submitted to the Legislature by January 1, 2022, with a final report due December 1, 2023.

Summary of Bill: The Law Enforcement Community Engagement Project expiration date of January 1, 2024, is extended one year to January 1, 2025.

Appropriation: The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 4, 2023.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Community policing builds a partnership between police and our neighborhoods. It mitigates the polarization between police and

civilians. It builds a positive relationship between police and neighborhoods. It makes sense to continue to work on this partnership. The grant program has been very positive. There is a need for more partnership, more support and more training for law enforcement. Renew the funding for CLEP. There are people who are in fear of reporting to law enforcement and are frustrated with the system. Extending this would help build relationships with law enforcement and would help communities feel safe to report. The date on the bill may need to be extended out even further.

OTHER: This effort is not included in the Governor's budget. This program was developed two years ago in the Department of Commerce. Fourteen grants were issued to organizations across the state, funding a variety of projects to make neighborhoods safe and develop trust between police and communities and encourage community participation. It establishes lines of communication between residents and law enforcement as an avenue to prevent crime, rather than react to it. This program respects the needs of communities, and recognizing the importance of including Law enforcement. This bill should be expanded to allow the program to run through the biennium at a minimum.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Steve Conway, Prime Sponsor; Teresa Taylor, WACOPS - Washington Council of Police and Sheriffs; Stacey Okland, Okanogan County Community Coalition; Kyra Abrahamson, Washington Trafficking Prevention; Maria Lopez, Community Outreach Coordinator, Yakima Valley Conference of Governments; Nora Flemming de Sandoval, Safe Streets; Linda Thompson, Greater Spokane Substance Abuse Council (GSSAC) & WASAVP; Vicki Baker, Deputy Director, Yakima Valley Conference of Governments; Taylor Gardner, WA Assn of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.

OTHER: Kate Kelly, Department of Commerce, Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.