

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 23, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION TO APPLY FOR A \$15,000 ONE-TIME SPECIAL FUNDS GRANT FROM THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES FOR THREE INITIATIVES OF THE ALEXANDRIA COURT SERVICE UNIT (CSU)

ISSUE: City Council authorization to apply for \$15,000 one-time special fund grant from the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) for three initiatives of the Alexandria Court Service Unit.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council authorize staff to:

- (1) Submit a grant application to the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) in the amount of \$15,000 to fund (1) an upgraded video system to respond to police arrest calls after hours, (2) expand the Space of Her Own (SOHO) program in the West End area and (3) contract to train probation officers and mental health staff in a research-based parent education program for parents of court-involved youth. These grant funds come from the FY 2009 Virginia DCJS competitive grants allocation and are not connected to stimulus funds. The grant application is due May 14, 2009. No local match is required for these funds; and
- (2) Execute all necessary documents that may be required.

BACKGROUND: The Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant, administered by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), has unspent funds from the FY 2009 State allocated funds and is offering localities a chance to apply for these funds for juvenile justice prevention or intervention programs or for equipment that will enhance or improve the juvenile justice system. These funds are one-time offerings and if the City receives the grant award, the funds will need to be spent by September 30, 2009. The grant is due on May 14, 2009. There is no local match required to leverage the one-time special grant funds. The CSU wishes to use this grant funding to upgrade the current video system used to communicate with the police on after-hour juvenile arrests at a cost of \$5,000, expand the SOHO girls mentoring program to the West

End area of the City for \$5,500 and hire a consultant to train probation and other CSU staff in a research-based parenting education model for \$4,500 in consultant fees and expenses. The total cost of the grant is \$15,000 and each initiative is a one-time expenditure which can be concluded by the September 30, 2009, deadline.

DISCUSSION: Virginia law requires police officers to contact a CSU intake officer when making a juvenile arrest after-hours. A juvenile intake officer is available at all times to respond to these calls in a timely manner, to instruct the police officer and issue the necessary detention order (warrant) if the youth is placed in detention. The CSU intake officer is required to make face-to-face contact with the juvenile for a probable cause interview. During the last six years, this communication takes place by the police officer talking to the CSU intake officer through video equipment which operates using a dial-up modem. The video system is located at the police station which requires that the arresting police officer proceed to the police station after a juvenile arrest. The CSU intake officer has the other part of the video device at his or her home. The technology of this equipment has become outdated and is no longer supported by the manufacturer and is not capable of utilizing high speed internet. The CSU wishes to purchase updated VIACK equipment which will allow the police more portability as it has the ability to hook up to computers in the police officer's vehicle. The arresting police officer will be able to talk to the CSU intake officer in real time and with fewer disruptions. The CSU intake officer will be able to check the juvenile's criminal background instantaneously and email a signed detention order directly to the police officer at that moment and location. The equipment will help to significantly speed up the juvenile arrest process. The cost of the equipment upgrade is \$2,035 and purchase of a three year license fee of \$2,736. The cost of this initiative is approximately \$5,000.

The second initiative that this grant would fund is the expansion of the SOHO Program. CSU, along with the Art League, operates the SOHO program, a mentoring program for at-risk girls in Alexandria. This program has enjoyed a great deal of success and recognition and has yielded exceptional outcomes in that 95% of participants have not become court-involved and 80% of all mentor relationships have lasted over a year.

In the past few years, the school system staff and others have been requesting a SOHO program in the west end of the City. The program has not been expanded due to lack of funding. This grant will enable the CSU and ACPS staff to work on expanding the program. There are already 64 potential female mentors on a waiting list for this program and many retired art instructors have offered to volunteer with the art instruction portion of the program. The CSU staff will be involved with the initial development of the program which will then be completely operated by a school social worker from Hammond Middle School. This prevention program costs approximately \$750 per youth. The program has already raised \$5,000 from other sources and will need \$5,500 from this grant to completely fund the cost of the expansion of the west end SOHO (WE - SOHO) to pay for art supplies and room renovation material for 14 fifth grade girls from Tucker and Ramsey Elementary Schools.

The third initiative the CSU wishes to fund involves a research-based parenting program for parents of court-involved youth. Currently, the CSU operates a program entitled "Parenting with Love and Limits" which is an evidence-based model program proven to have an impact on

parents who have children involved in the juvenile justice system. Recently, the CSU was notified by the developer of the program that there will be an annual licensing fee of \$10,000 in order to continue use of the program materials. The CSU began to look for other culturally sensitive programs and discovered the “Strengthening Families” (SFP) curriculum which is a nationally and internationally recognized parenting and family strengthening program for high-risk families and is used in juvenile justice settings in many states. It is recommended by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the National Institute on Drug Abuse as well as many other federal agencies. This interactive parenting education program will help the juvenile probation officers and mental health staff to receive more participation, engagement and cooperation from the parents of the youth in the court system which is critical in reducing delinquency and helping parents learn more effective parenting skills. After the training is completed, CSU staff will deliver the parent education classes in English and Spanish. The grant would fund the cost of travel expenses of consultants to train 10 CSU staff and a site-limited license to copy the course material. The total cost of this part of the grant is \$4,500 for travel and expenses of trainers (the LutraGroup, SP).

FISCAL IMPACT: The total one-time grant award would be \$15,000 to be expended by September 30, 2009. The grant application is due May 14, 2009, and there is no local match requirement.

Two of the three initiatives are one-time costs. The other for the expansion of the SOHO program, would need to raise \$5,500 from other non-City sources to be continued in the future. No additional City funds will be made available to replace these grant funds once they are expended.

The grant is administered by the CSU and requires minimal staff time from the Finance Department and Office of Management and Budget.

No new positions will be created by this grant.

STAFF:

Lillian Brooks, Director CSU

Paul Doku, OMB Budget Analyst