

# **Simulation Training:** **Your Guide to Grants Funding**



# EDITOR'S NOTE

Preparing officers for the life-and-death situations they will face in the field is a critical component of any agency's training program. A variety of simulation and virtual reality options are available to help officers train in a safe environment so that they understand how and when to use force and have the skills to prevail in the field when necessary.

This eBook provides guidance on where to find grant funding for the purchase of a training simulator, including federal grants from the Department of Justice and other sources, as well as states and alternative funding opportunities. It also includes key tips for preparing to apply for a grant and a feature on the VirTra training simulator.

These articles, plus a list of essential resources for more information, will help your department ensure that your officers are prepared for success.

– Nancy Perry, PoliceOne Editor-in-Chief

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# ABOUT THE SPONSOR **VirTra**

VirTra was founded in 1993 and was one of the first virtual reality-based companies in the world. The company's primary focus is developing and delivering realistic firearms and use of force training simulation systems.

As a society, we've come to understand just how controversial our society has become. It is now more critical than ever before that our military and law enforcement officers are equipped to make the best decisions in split-second, life-and-death situations. We are committed to providing better and more realistic training so officers will succeed when lives are at stake.

VirTra offers a full line of realistic firearms training and judgmental use-of-force training simulation

systems, along with best-in-class customer service and unparalleled technology, including options with up to 300-degree real-world threat scenarios, tetherless recoil kits and the safe, patented Threat-Fire return fire device.

VirTra also created a new category of training with relevant coursework and certified curriculum, which allows officers certified training for their time in the simulator. Together, these tools and certified curriculum provide superior training that is unmatched by any other simulation training experience.

Visit [www.virtra.com](http://www.virtra.com) for more information.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Maggie Perry**, a grant writer and consultant for PoliceGrantsHelp, is a Certified Grant Writer with a bachelor's degree in liberal arts and sciences. She is a member of both the American Grant Writers Association and the Grant Professionals Association and is currently employed as a grant manager for a municipality, where she is responsible for all grant research, writing and administration for police, fire and public works grants. Maggie has more than seven years of experience in program development, research, proposal writing and grant management and has secured more than \$3 million in funding and has a funding rate of 69 percent.

**Therese Matthews**, a senior grant writer and consultant for PoliceGrantsHelp, is a highly respected grant professional with more than 25 years of experience in grant writing, grants management and program development. Prior to her retirement in 2015, she was grants manager for the New Jersey Department of Corrections and successful in obtaining over \$140 million in federal, state and private grant funding for the agency. She also has extensive experience as a peer reviewer

for several federal and state grant applications, in addition to providing grant writing and grants management training to nonprofit and government agencies across New Jersey. She holds a bachelor's degree in sociology and criminal justice and a master's in public administration from Rutgers University.

**Samantha Dorm**, a senior grant writer for PoliceGrantsHelp and a contributor to PoliceOne, has been instrumental in providing grant writing guidance to various public safety and nonprofit agencies throughout the United States to enable them to obtain alternative funding, as well as provide instruction on statistical compilation, analysis and program development. Since 1999, when she was hired by a Pennsylvania district attorney's office to coordinate resources, Samantha has worked directly with agencies at all levels of government to acquire over \$40 million of funding for various programs. She is currently focusing on grant education, including custom content and speaking engagement opportunities, as well as consulting/reviewing and grant writing services.

# Where to find federal grant funding for firearms simulation technology



Various nationwide grants are available that focus on 21st-century policing elements, such as training, officer safety and evidence-based practices

By Therese Matthews

The U.S. Department of Justice is the nation's largest funding source for [grants](#) supporting law enforcement, corrections, prosecution, crime prevention and overall public safety. Over the past few years, many of these grant opportunities have focused on the pillars of 21st-century policing, including officer safety training.

Training tools and technology, such as those offered through [VirTra's](#) firearms training simulators, can be funded under many DOJ grant programs. Here are some to consider:

## Justice Assistance Grants

[JAG](#) funds support all sectors of the criminal justice system and are DOJ's largest source of funding for law enforcement equipment, training and technology. Formula funding comes to [State Administering Agencies](#) (SAA), which must sub-award a large portion of this funding to other state and local agencies.

Some communities also receive [local JAG](#) funding directly from DOJ based on their population and [Part 1](#) (major crimes) statistics. Contact your [SAA](#) to discuss your training needs.





## Project Safe Neighborhoods

[Project Safe Neighborhoods](#) is designed to create safer neighborhoods through a sustained reduction in gang violence and gun crime. Federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement, as well as other community stakeholders, engage in a unified strategy to investigate, prosecute and prevent violent crime.

Grant funds can be used to address critical officer safety concerns and situational awareness, as well as training, as long as it is tied back to your community's PSN strategy. This program, a centerpiece of DOJ's violent crime reduction efforts, is coordinated through the [U.S. Attorney's Office](#). Reach out to the U.S. Attorney's Office for your area to become a PSN partner.

## COPS School Violence Prevention Program

The Community Oriented Policing Services (aka COPS office) [School Violence Prevention Grants](#) allow states, local units of government and tribes to improve security at schools through evidenced-based school safety practices.

Training for local law enforcement officers to prevent student violence against others or themselves is one of the safety measures covered under this program. Grants awards average \$275,000. A 25 percent cash match is required.

## Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program

Consider the [Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program](#) grant opportunity if you are looking for de-escalation training to help respond to people with



mental disorders or co-occurring mental illness, as well as substance abuse. This grant requires collaboration between criminal justice (police, corrections, supervision, etc.) and behavioral health partners. Up to \$23 million is expected to be available this year to fund awards averaging \$350,000. A 20 percent cash or in-kind match is required.

### **National Officer Safety Initiatives Program**

The [National Officer Safety Initiatives](#) grant program aims to fund innovative training and technical assistance approaches to augment law enforcement safety in a variety of critical areas. Not only does this grant focus on developing strategies to address the emotional and mental aspects of police work, but also the strategic and tactical aspects of the profession, to improve officer safety and health so that they can better serve their communities.

If your agency or task force has experience in training at a regional or national level, consider this grant source. Fifteen grants up to \$1 million each will be awarded this fiscal year.

### **Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation**

Each year, DOJ offers millions in funding to tribal governments through one large solicitation known as [CTAS](#), which encompasses 10 grant programs. One of the nine purpose areas for which tribes are using these funds is public safety and community policing, but training and technology are allowable under many of the 10 programs. The application period for 2019 has closed; however, funding should be offered again in 2020.



## Practitioner/Research Partnership Grants

Evaluating law enforcement training techniques opens the doors for many DOJ grant opportunities. Collaborations between academic researchers and criminal justice agencies can place you in a competitive advantage to receive grant funding. These collaborations have sparked the development of innovative programs, brought equipment and other resources to the table and encouraged data-driven decision-making.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance within DOJ has several researcher/practitioner partnership grant opportunities through its [Innovations Suite](#) of programs. Those that may allow training simulation systems include:

- **Strategies for Policing Innovation (SPI)** (formally Smart Policing Initiative) grants enable police agencies to identify, test and expand innovative and evidence-based programs and strategies. This includes approaches that deal with violent offenders and are intended to decrease the risk of harm to first responders. Grants of up to \$650,000 each will be awarded this year.
- **Supporting Innovation (Field-Initiated Programs)** encourages the use of practitioner-researcher partnerships to demonstrate and replicate programs that respond to emerging or chronic crime problems. Improving safety for both officers and the public is a focus under this program. Grant awards average \$500,000, and up to 16 awards are anticipated this year.
- **The National Institute of Justice** is DOJ's research, development and evaluation arm. NIJ offers many grant opportunities each year, such as the [Research and Evaluation on Policing](#) grant, which closed May 7, 2019.

Most of these grants recur each year, so you can prepare for next year's application cycle by reading the 2019 solicitation, as well as following the objectives identified in NIJ's [Policing Strategic Research Plan 2017-2020](#). These include, among many, examining the impact of your academy, in-service training and supporting practices, along with other technologies to advance officer safety.

Randomized control trial studies are required, and your research partner must initiate the grants. A total of \$3 million has been allocated for this program in 2019, and awards will vary in size depending on the proposed scope.

## Final Thoughts

All grants are competitive. The more innovative and collaborative your strategy, the better your chances of receiving an award.

Start preparing early for those grants you would like to pursue. Most grant application periods average only four weeks once the solicitation is announced. (See Page 14 for tips to get grant ready.)

Continue to monitor [Grants.gov](#) and the [Office of Justice Programs](#) and [COPS](#) grant websites so you're aware as soon as these grant opportunities are posted.

The team at [PoliceGrantsHelp](#) is ready to help. Our grant assistance program includes several options, including grant research, grant writing and grant application review.



# Consider a variety of sources when applying for grant money



Federal programs are a logical first step, but state, local or private grants may be a better fit for smaller departments or specialized projects





By Maggie Perry

Every law enforcement agency wants to ensure that their officers are well trained. However, budget shortfalls, which affect all agencies across the nation, limit the ability of many departments to satisfy advanced training needs. Grant funding is an excellent way to fill those budget gaps.

Law enforcement has come under intense public scrutiny recently after several officer-involved shootings, which is why it is critical that officers have advanced training methods available to them to ensure they have the skills necessary to do their jobs effectively.

Training simulators can be used to target prevention efforts and to improve officer safety and performance. Additionally, firearms simulation technology can help law enforcement agencies foster a positive relationship with the citizens they serve.

## Federal DOJ Grants

The logical first step is to look at the many grant opportunities through the Department of Justice that are directed toward criminal justice and law enforcement. Keep in mind, however, that although the DOJ is an excellent source of grant funding, federal grant opportunities are often very specific program grants, so purchasing scenario training simulators may not be an eligible activity.

One of the most recognizable federal grant programs that prioritize law enforcement training and equipment is the [Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant](#), aka JAG. There are two types of JAG funding: local and state. Smaller departments often assume that they are not eligible for JAG funds if they are not receiving a direct allocation. This assumption is false. If your agency does not receive a local allocation, you can still apply for funding through your State Administering Agency.



**Training** and technology are key focus areas for JAG funds. Each SAA has a strategic plan that outlines its mission for criminal justice funding, so be sure to familiarize yourself with the SAA priorities and funding process (find your state here). This will not only provide you with a timeline for submission, but the plan will also enable your department to make informed decisions based on the problems identified for your state.

For example, one state may identify a high rate of gun-related crimes while a neighboring state reports an increase in domestic violence calls. The problem you are looking to address should drive the source of the funding. Knowing the priority in advance will enable your department to craft your proposal to address your state's priority. In other words, you may be able to fund your desired solution (the equipment) by approaching it through a different problem (gun violence versus domestic violence).

## State Grants

When a project doesn't align with federal opportunities, consider seeking funding through your state. Many states provide grant opportunities specifically for criminal justice needs. For example, Texas offers the [Texas Criminal Justice Division County Essential Services Program](#) to provide

financial assistance to counties for essential law enforcement services.

However, grant opportunities are not limited to those directly related to criminal justice. Some states offer grant opportunities that focus on services provided to municipal governments, including public safety. The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development offers a [Municipal Assistance Grant Program](#) to help local governments implement a variety of services and improvements. Louisiana offers the [Local Government Assistance Program](#), which is designed to fill the gaps for local governments where no federal or other state funds are available. Colorado's Department of Local Affairs manages a number of [grant and loan programs](#) designed to address public service needs.

If you are scouring your state's grant opportunities and can't find anything that would fit your needs, reach out to your state representatives. Their offices can help you digest the often overwhelming amount of state solicitations available. It's also an excellent opportunity to let your elected officials know what your needs are as one of the law enforcement agencies in their district, because there may be other funding that can be used to meet those needs.





## Partnerships Receive Priority

Many of these grant opportunities prioritize partnerships. Multiple law enforcement agencies partnering on a grant application will enhance your application and increase your chances of getting funded. A simulation training setup can be the perfect opportunity to partner with other agencies, because it can be a shared resource.

Partnerships can also open the door to grant opportunities that aren't necessarily focused on criminal justice – take, for example, a grant targeted toward school safety where the school district is the applicant. The [VirTra](#) simulation training platform offers numerous scenarios to train for active shooter response and can be utilized for school safety initiatives. A school district or community college may be able to use the funding to purchase the technology to train local law enforcement.

Simulation training technology also can be used to bridge the gap between law enforcement and the citizens in the community they serve. Consider opening the training experience to your Citizen Police Academy, Citizen Oversight Committee or members of the media to help the public become more empathetic to what law enforcement officers do every day.

## Private Grants

Foundations are an excellent, often overlooked resource for public safety funds. Typically, foundation funds are designated for a specific community need that, at first glance, may not seem a good fit for law enforcement. However, if you are willing to do a little digging into the foundation's priorities you may be able to link the community impact that law enforcement technology can have with the foundation's goals.

Adding civilian training to your program can open the door to private grant opportunities, such as the [National Rifle Association Foundation grant](#), which offers funding to “educate individuals, including the youth of the United States, with respect to firearms, firearms history, participation in the shooting sports, hunting safety and marksmanship, as well as with respect to other subjects that are of importance to the well-being of the general public.”

This is why it is critical to really think through all the benefits that simulation training can offer not only your agency but also the community. For example, VirTra simulators can be used for community outreach events in addition to officer training. Those benefits can open your agency's efforts to grant funding outside of typical criminal justice opportunities.



# Grant money adds up



By Samantha L. Dorm

It sounds easy when someone says “look at alternatives” or “be creative” in your funding approach. But what does that mean when it comes to grants? If you need a match for a grant, don’t automatically pass up an opportunity to apply. Instead, look for other resources. You can match federal funds to state, local or private contributions.

People often look only to the obvious sources of funding. Schools turn to the Department of Education, while police departments rely heavily on funding from the Department of Justice. Below is an example of how to go about acquiring the funds needed for your firearms simulation project by applying to more than one grant.

## Scenario:

A department needs \$100,000 for its firearms simulation project. The technology and training will be made available to multiple agencies in the county.

A JAG grant is open through the SAA, but the department receives a direct allocation from the federal government and is therefore ineligible to apply. Also, the maximum award for this one-time opportunity is capped at \$50,000.

What should the agency do?

## Recommendation:

Step 1: Have one of the neighboring departments that appears on the eligible list apply for the grant on behalf of the group. You’ll need to secure a written agreement between the two parties to assign the funds to the department that will host the training site. This document is required at the time of application. It is often referred to as a “pass-through agreement.”

Step 2: Apply for a municipal assistance grant from the state’s Department of Community and Economic Development in the amount of \$100,000. The source of the funds is from state taxes and is a 50/50 matching grant. The \$50,000 from the federal JAG grant can be used to match the state funds in the amount of \$50,000.

Municipal assistance grants are only available for projects that will benefit two or more municipalities. A copy of a shared use or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be required at the time the application is submitted.

In the above scenario, the department that will host the training site would be the lead applicant for the state grant and listed as a sub-awardee for the federal funds. This way, 100 percent of your project gets funded and everyone benefits.



# Grant Spotlight

State and federal funds generated from taxes are not the only sources for grants to assist police departments. Departments located in the state of Washington may be eligible to

apply for assistance from the [Firearms and Archery Range Recreation \(FARR\) Program](#). This program is supported by a portion of each concealed pistol license fee.

## Typical Projects

- Installing fences, berms and other noise and safety elements
- Upgrading equipment
- Renovating clubhouses
- Building new shooting courses

## Funding Source

Funding comes from a portion of each concealed pistol license fee.

## Who can apply?

- Local agencies
- Special purpose districts
- State agencies
- Nonprofit shooting organizations

The above entities must be authorized legally to develop, operate and maintain recreational facilities.

## Match requirements

All projects require a 50 percent match, except noise abatement or safety improvement items, which have a 33 percent match. At least 10 percent of the total project cost must come from a non-state, non-federal contribution. Match may include:

- Applicant's cash, labor, materials and equipment use
- Donations of land, equipment, labor and materials
- Local, federal, private and state grants

Grant Cap = \$150,000

For departments not in Washington state, check with your local permits office to see if they may be able to help fund your simulation training system or suggest a potential funding source.

# GET GRANT READY

The application period for grants can be brief, so take steps now to be prepared

By Samantha Dorm

Did you know that only about 20 percent of the time it takes to complete a winning proposal actually involves the writing of narratives? There are many components to a grant application, especially if your agency is applying for federal or state funding, so it's best to start early.

Here are a few tips to help your organization get ready:

## Administrative Requirements

If you or your agency are not already enrolled in the Grants.gov online grants portal for federal grants, take a few minutes to watch the online tutorial on the [How to Register with Grants.gov](#) page before creating your accounts.

Enrollment is free but can be time-consuming, often taking a week to 10 days for validation. The resource materials will help you to determine what type of information will be required so that you have it readily available to complete the registration.

To complete the registration for individual state grant portals, please check the site for your state administering agency (SAA) to connect to the correct grant portal. Instructions are available online, or you can call your agency's help desk for additional support.

Always have two or more individuals enrolled with active accounts. Most databases now require that a different person be assigned to the roles of Program Manager and Fiscal Contact. Failure to comply could result in your agency's inability to submit your application before crucial deadlines.

Don't forget to check all the information listed on file for your organization. Correspondence generally comes in the form of an email, so any time there is a change in staff or administration (i.e., a new mayor or county commissioner), online databases need to be updated to be sure you receive important notices, including payments, on time.

## Data Collection

Depending on the grant that you wish to pursue, various data/statistical elements may be required beyond the standard Uniform Crime Reports. Consider compiling information in advance to review a minimum of three years' worth of data to demonstrate trends. Things to consider:

- Number of officer-involved shootings.
- Number of injuries/fatalities.
  - o Subsections for officers and civilians.
- Number of complaints and/or litigations against the department.
  - o What is the financial impact?
- How often must the officers qualify for firearms each year?
- How much does it cost?
- Summarize proficiency rates.

Several of the data elements listed above will help your agency create its financial needs statement by being able to explain how much the department spends each year through its current practices, compared to the benefits expected from a simulation training program and the required tools.





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“The STEP program allows law enforcement entities to request the money under their training budget, not under their equipment budget.”

—Capt. Jody Hayes, West Des Moines Iowa Police Department

Schedule an assessment today by visiting [step.virtra.com](https://step.virtra.com)

# Get more **BANG** for your training buck with a simulation training subscription



VirTra now offers a monthly subscription program to provide customizable, realistic simulation training without a large capital investment

At the end of 2018, PoliceOne issued its annual list of [trends and predictions](#) for the year ahead, including a forecast of a coming funding crunch for law enforcement agencies that will put extreme pressure on operational effectiveness.

That article quotes Jim Bueermann, a retired police chief and former National Police Federation president, warning that police agencies will begin to feel the effects of a coming global recession in the latter half of 2019, which will kick off a noticeable reduction in personnel in many law enforcement

agencies and force the re-examination of basic service delivery models.

In other words, law enforcement will once again be asked to do even more for less budget, and department leaders may be tempted to economize in non-public facing areas, such as officer training. However, skimping on training increases the risk of negative outcomes that damage confidence and open the door to costly lawsuits. Consequently, legislators may then feel pressure to pull back on the budgetary reins even harder, cutting off funds for capital





equipment purchases necessary to make policing safer for officers and the community.

### Custom Subscription Training

In response to these challenges, [VirTra](#) developed a subscription approach to help bring essential training technology within reach for more departments, even those facing reductions in capital expense budgets. The [Subscription Training & Equipment Partnership](#), or STEP program, enables departments of all sizes to benefit from VirTra's training solutions, including multi-screen training simulators, courseware and development tools.

The program offers the option to engage through a monthly, quarterly or annual subscription basis rather than an up-front outlay. That enables departments to move long-term investments in officer training from capital expenses (that require administrative and legislative approval) to a single payment that's just a line item in the operational budget.

Converting capital expenses to operating costs through a monthly subscription is the basis of the cloud computing revolution that has transformed the information technology industry. Tech companies refer to this as Software as a Service, or SaaS model,

and this approach has made computing power available to smaller businesses by eliminating the need to invest in costly data centers.

VirTra applied this approach, dubbed "Training Solution as a Service (TSaaS)," to help law enforcement agencies that need but may not be able to afford the advanced, immersive training that simulators deliver. Budgeting for a training service instead of a capital purchase solves the funding problem for many agencies.

"The STEP program provides agencies an immediate path to train with the industry's best, at an affordable price point and without the uncertainties that a large capital purchase decision can induce," said Jason Mulcahy, VirTra general manager. "We've already begun providing STEP to eager customers, and the initial reaction is extremely positive. We expect to continue to see positive reviews and benefits as we ramp up the new program."

### Choose your own adventure

The STEP program offers a customizable solution that allows an agency to select a combination of equipment, software training solutions, certified coursework and tools that best fit its training needs and budget. Available options include:



- **V-VICTA** interactive coursework (nationally certified coursework accompanies the scenarios for CE credit hours).
- Immersive **training simulators**, such as V-300, V-180, V-ST or portable single-screen V-100.
- Hundreds of branching training scenarios, skill drills and courses of fire.
- V-Marksmanship, which provides ballistically accurate advanced skill drills training.
- Realistic drop-in recoil kits for the most widely used firearms.
- The stress inducing **Threat-Fire** training tool to simulate return fire.
- **V-Author**, VirTra's exclusive software tool that allows customers to edit, create or author training scenarios from scratch with their own characters or scenery.
- TASER, OC spray and low-light training support for safe training any time of day.

an annual basis, which is perfect for government entities due to our yearly budget cycles,” said Captain Jody Hayes of the West Des Moines Iowa Police Department. “We never know exactly what our budget lines will be from year to year, so it’s very difficult to commit to multi-year or large-scale purchases.”

Hayes says purchasing a system outright wasn’t the best solution for West Des Moines because technology is improving so quickly, and the department did not want to risk getting locked into an antiquated system that would end up incurring further costs to maintain and update.

The STEP program includes a lifetime warranty and service for the product, as well as providing the replacement equipment and the newest technology as an agency renews its contract.

“Since they own it, they service it and update it,” said Hayes. “It’s not your worry.”

Previously, departments needed to procure hundreds of thousands of dollars to implement these capabilities. That meant going up the chain of command, seeking legislative authorization, applying for grants and spending valuable time and resources jumping through hoops to bring necessary safety and training improvements in de-escalation and use-of-force measures.

Even authorities who recognize the need and value of an officer training program may balk at the price tag for a suite of new equipment and instead choose a subpar option that doesn’t train officers properly. But with the subscription option, departments can select the elements that best fit their needs and budgets.

“The STEP program allows departments to rent the VirTra system on



## RESOURCES



**PoliceOne on Training**



**PoliceOne on Use of Force**



**Department of Justice Grants**



**BJA Grants**

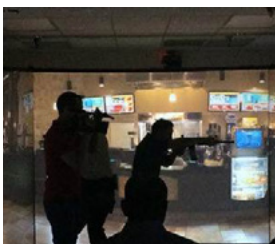


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## ARTICLES



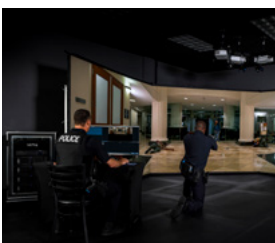
### **3 elements of effective police training**

Use varied approaches for maximum impact, including field training, online learning and virtual reality simulation



### **How virtual reality simulation can maximize your training efforts**

The VirTra V-300 immerses officers in realistic scenarios to help them make better decisions under duress



### **Why we need to train officers before we can test them**

Effective education involves pre-tests, post-tests, evaluation rubrics, performance objectives and scripted presentation materials



### **How to use simulation technology to educate your community about the realities of policing today**

Not only do immersive simulators deliver cutting-edge training to officers, they can also help educate communities about the realities of use of force