



WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service
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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: February 25, 2025

DATE: Thursday, February 20, 2025

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Noah Boyer, Sergeant,
(775) 785-6217; NBoyer@washoecounty.gov

THROUGH: Darin Balaam, Sheriff

SUBJECT: Recommendation to accept a Justice Assistance Grant award [amount not to exceed \$57,400.00, no County match required] as administered through the State of Nevada Department of Public Safety Office, Office of Criminal Justice Assistance, to cover the cost of equipment for the Special Weapons and Tactics Team, Special Operations Division, for the retroactive grant period of January 1, 2025 through September 30, 2025; authorize the Sheriff to retroactively execute the award document; and direct Finance to make the necessary budget amendments. (All Commission Districts)

SUMMARY

This grant has been awarded to cover the costs of hearing protection with integrated communication capability. This equipment will be used by the Special Operations division of the Sheriff's Office while responding to active assailant situations. The equipment will allow operators to effectually communicate in high noise dynamic environments while providing protection from hearing loss.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item: Safe, secure and healthy communities.

PREVIOUS ACTION

None

BACKGROUND

The Washoe County Sheriff's Office has been awarded the Justice Assistance Grant to our Special Operations Division to purchase hearing protection with integrated communication capability. The Washoe County Sheriff's Office SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) team plays a crucial role in maintaining public safety during high-risk operations within Washoe County.

AGENDA ITEM # _____

Washoe County Sheriff's Office SWAT team is tasked with managing high-risk, complex operations, such as hostage rescues, counter-terrorism missions, and raids involving heavily armed suspects. These operations often occur in dynamic, volatile environments where split-second decisions can mean the difference between life and death. As the SWAT team confronts heavily armed individuals, explosive devices, and other high-threat scenarios, the need for both hearing protection and reliable communication becomes critical. Integrated hearing protection and communication systems are not just luxuries but essential components for the success and safety of SWAT operations.

One of the major threats the SWAT team faces is the overwhelming sound levels produced by firearms, flashbangs, and other explosive devices. Exposure to these high-decibel sounds, even for a short duration, can cause immediate and long-term hearing damage, impairing not only the individual operators' ability to perform in the moment but also affecting their overall health and effectiveness in future missions. Traditional hearing protection, such as earmuffs or earplugs, might mitigate hearing loss but can also hinder situational awareness and communication—two elements that are crucial for the success of SWAT operations.

This is where integrated hearing protection and communication systems become essential. These systems provide dual functionality: they protect deputies' hearing from damaging noise levels while simultaneously allowing clear communication among team members. Without such integration, deputies are forced to choose between protecting their hearing and maintaining team coordination—an unacceptable tradeoff in high-stakes situations. Effective communication is central to the success of any SWAT mission, as teams must operate with precision, sharing critical information on threats, tactical movements, and changes in strategy. Failure to communicate due to blocked or unclear channels could result in mission failure, injuries, or loss of life.

Integrated systems also enhance situational awareness by using advanced technologies that filter out harmful noise levels while amplifying safe, necessary sounds. This means that SWAT operators can still hear footsteps, voices, and other important auditory cues in the environment while being protected from the damaging effects of gunfire or explosions. This heightened awareness is crucial when SWAT teams operate in environments that require stealth, as well as in close-quarters engagements where split-second reactions are necessary for survival.

In addition to operational efficiency, integrated hearing protection and communication systems significantly contribute to the long-term health and readiness of SWAT officers. Prolonged exposure to hazardous noise without protection can result in permanent hearing loss, tinnitus, or other auditory impairments, reducing a deputies' ability to continue serving on the team. Ensuring that deputies are equipped with the proper tools to protect their hearing while maintaining communication capability helps preserve the well-being of SWAT personnel, allowing them to perform at their peak over the long term.

The current hearing protection used by SWAT members has reached an end of serviceable life and has significant reliability issues and does not integrate well with the

new P25 compliant radios. Our previous hearing protection was acquired through a donation and replacement is not within the SWAT budget. The SWAT Team was awarded \$57,400.00 to purchase hearing protection with integrated communication push to talks, rail mounts for integration to ballistic helmets and power supplies.

Reason for retroactive submittal: Item was submitted to the first available Board of County Commissioners meeting once all paperwork was received and processed for the grant period of January 1, 2025 through September 30, 2025.

GRANT AWARD SUMMARY

Project/Program Name: *SWAT hearing protection with integrated communication*

Scope of the Project: *Purchase 35 pairs of hearing protection with integrated communication capability, helmet mounts, push to talks, and power supplies.*

Benefit to Washoe County Residents: *Equipping the Washoe County Sheriff's Office SWAT team with hearing protection that includes integrated communication capabilities offers significant benefits to county residents by enhancing public safety and operational efficiency. These advanced systems protect deputies from hearing damage caused by loud noises, such as gunfire or explosions, ensuring they remain focused and effective during critical incidents. The integrated communication features allow team members to coordinate seamlessly in real-time, even in high-noise environments, reducing the risk of miscommunication and enabling faster, more precise responses. By equipping the SWAT team with this technology, the county ensures its deputies can perform at their best, minimizing risks to both them and the community during emergencies. This investment reflects a commitment to the safety and well-being of both law enforcement personnel and the residents they serve.*

On-Going Program Support: *N/A*

Award Amount: *\$57,400.00*

Grant Period: *January 1, 2025 through September 30, 2025*

Funding Source: *U.S. Department of Justice*

Pass through From: *State of Nevada Department of Public Safety, Office of Criminal Justice Assistance*

Assistance Listing #/CFDA: *16.738*

Grant ID Number: *22-JAG-27*

Match Amount and Type: *No Match Required*

Sub-Awards and Contracts: *None*

FISCAL IMPACT

Should the Board accept this award and approve these amendments, the adopted FY25 Sheriff's Office budget will be increased by \$57,400.00 in both revenues and expenditures in the following accounts:

Cost Object & Description	G/L Account & Description	Amount
IO-12492 2024 OCJA JAG SWAT Comm	431100-Federal Grants	\$57,400.00
IO-12492 2024 OCJA JAG SWAT Comm	711504-Equipment non-capital	\$57,400.00

- *No match required*
- *Indirect costs are not allowable on this grant award as no salary or wages are included in the grant budget.*

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of County Commissioners accept a Justice Assistance Grant award [amount not to exceed \$57,400.00, no County match required] as administered through the State of Nevada Department of Public Safety Office, Office of Criminal Justice Assistance, to cover the cost of equipment for the Special Weapons and Tactics Team, Special Operations Division, for the retroactive grant period of January 1, 2025 through September 30, 2025; authorize the Sheriff to retroactively execute the award document; and direct Finance to make the necessary budget amendments.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with staff's recommendation, a possible motion would be: "Move accept a Justice Assistance Grant award [amount not to exceed \$57,400.00, no County match required] as administered through the State of Nevada Department of Public Safety Office, Office of Criminal Justice Assistance, to cover the cost of equipment for the Special Weapons and Tactics Team, Special Operations Division, for the retroactive grant period of January 1, 2025 through September 30, 2025; authorize the Sheriff to retroactively execute the award document; and direct Finance to make the necessary budget amendments."