

# FUNDING FOR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

## SCHOOL ACCESS FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM

### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

A grant program to provide schools and public safety communication systems owners (e.g., local entities responsible for emergency communications, such as local law enforcement or 911 dispatch centers) with funding for needed interoperable communication hardware, software, equipment maintenance, and training.

### WHAT IS THE PROGRAM AND WHAT SERVICE DOES IT PROVIDE?

The General Assembly created the School Access for Emergency Response Grant Program with Senate Bill 18-158 “to allow for seamless communications between new or existing school communications systems and first responder communications systems” [Section 24-33.5-2104(1), C.R.S.]. Statute [Section 24-33.5-2104(2), C.R.S.], allows funds to be used to:

- Deliver training programs to teach school district-based security personnel and appropriate school personnel basic procedures for effective communications with first responders in an emergency.
- Implement or upgrade interoperable technology solutions such as a system that can be activated and deactivated by the public safety 911 answering point to help mitigate the potential overloading of a radio network if activated by an untrained user.
- Maintain or improve a school’s existing interoperable communication hardware or software, or provide such hardware and software to a school that does not yet have it.

- Expand radio system capacity where school use has been determined to have a significant usage impact on public safety communication systems.

The program provides up to \$5 million in grants annually to schools and public safety communication system owners over a 6-year period, through Fiscal Year 2024 [Section 24-33.5-2017(1)(b), C.R.S.].

Statute charges the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) within the Department of Public Safety (Public Safety) with administering the grant. DHSEM is responsible for promulgating rules establishing time frames for the grant program, working with a grant selection committee created in statute to review and award grants, receiving reports from awarded schools about how the funds were used and the number of students enrolled, and reporting to the General Assembly [Section 24-33.5-2104, et seq., C.R.S.].

DHSEM has two staff who administer a number of school safety funding programs, including this program as well as the Enhance School Safety Incident Response Grant Program and the School Security Disbursement Program, both of which are described in other sections of APPENDIX A. In Fiscal Year 2019, these staff established an application for the grant with award criteria, posted notice of the application, held information sessions with potential applicants, worked with the grant selection committee to review and score 39 applications totaling about \$12.5 million in requested funding, awarded grants, and negotiated contracts for 12 projects for a total of \$4,857,354, representing 12 unique school districts. Public Safety noted that the types of projects applied for and approved likely do not reflect the breadth of school needs for security improvements. Applicants only had 1 month to submit applications after Public Safety posted notice of the grant program. Public Safety reported that only school districts that had projects that were fully planned and ready to start were able to submit applications in that short timeframe.

Examples of funded projects include the purchase and installation of mobile radio units, as well as replacing or upgrading existing

interoperable technology such as communication tech towers and digital radios, communication system software and licensing, and training for school safety teams on the systems.

The exhibit below outlines the number of school districts that received funding in Fiscal Years 2019; no public safety communication system owners received awards.

SCHOOL ACCESS FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT RECEIVED GRANT FUNDS FISCAL YEAR 2019	
SCHOOL DISTRICT BY SETTING	2019
Denver Metro	3
Urban-Suburban	1
Outlying City	4
Outlying Town	2
Remote	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>

SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of data provided by the Department of Public Safety and school district setting information provided by the Department of Education.

### HOW IS THE PROGRAM FUNDED AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

The program is funded with an appropriation from the State Public School Fund to the School Access for Emergency Response Grant Program Cash Fund [Section 24-33.5-2107, C.R.S.]. The State Public School Fund is established in Section 22-54-114, C.R.S., and consists primarily of federal mineral lease revenue and a portion of rent and royalties from state school trust lands. In Fiscal Year 2019, the State Public School Fund contributed about \$142.7 million to the state share of school finance.

The program began in Fiscal Year 2019, when the General Assembly, through Senate Bill 18-158, provided authority for the appropriation of \$5,000,000 annually from the State Public School Fund.

SCHOOL ACCESS FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM SOURCES OF EXPENDED FUNDS FISCAL YEARS 2019 AND 2020		
FUNDING SOURCE	2019	2020 (BUDGETED)
State Public School Fund	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000

SOURCE: Office of the State Auditor analysis of Fiscal Year 2019 expense data from the Colorado Operations Resource Engine and the Joint Budget Committee Appropriations Report for Fiscal Year 2020.

Program expenses include:

- **GRANT AWARDS.** DHSEM awarded 12 grants worth about \$4.86 million for Fiscal Year 2019 and another eight grants worth about \$4.86 million for Fiscal Year 2020.
- **ADMINISTRATION,** including personnel costs for the two DHSEM staff who administer the grant program. Statute allows Public Safety to use up to 3 percent of the money annually appropriated for the program to pay the direct and indirect costs that it incurs to administer the program [Section 24-33.5-2107(3), C.R.S.]. The program’s annual appropriation of \$5 million means that the Public Safety can use no more than \$150,000 for administration. In Fiscal Year 2019, DHSEM used \$142,646 for administration. DHSEM staff reported that future grant awards and monitoring is expected to be extensive, as the grant application, award review, contracting and grant monitoring process will occur with new applicants annually through the end of the program in 2024.

**WHAT DOES THE DEPARTMENT REPORT ABOUT THE PROGRAM?**

Statute requires the following annual reporting for this program:

- Grantees are required to submit a report to DHSEM on (1) the number of schools that used grant money to provide training, (2) the number of schools that used grant money to provide or upgrade interoperate technology, and (3) the total number of students enrolled in the schools that received the grant money [Section 24-33.5-2106(1), C.R.S.]. The first reports are due January 2020.

- Public Safety is required to include in its annual report to the General Assembly a summary of the activities of the grant program [Section 24-33.5-2106(2), C.R.S.]. In its January 2019 report, Public Safety reported a summary of its work to date administering the grant, including the districts and amounts awarded. The next report is due January 2020.