

# School Access for Emergency Response Grant Program Application Guidebook FY2026



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**Office of School Safety**  
Department of Public Safety

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[OSS Grants Unit](#)

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# 1 GENERAL INFORMATION

## 1.1 Executive Summary

The purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA) is to solicit applications for the School Access for Emergency Response Grant Program (SB 18-158) and (SB23-241). This is a discretionary grant program and a total of \$4,850,000 in funding is available to eligible applicants.

This grant program provides funding to deliver training programs to teach effective communications with first responders in an emergency, to implement interoperable technology solutions, to provide or upgrade systems for effective communication with first responders in an emergency, to maintain, improve or provide interoperable communications hardware or software, and for any necessary radio system capacity expansions where school loading has been determined to have a significant impact on public safety system loading. Hardware used for daily operations is not eligible for funding. This funding is exclusively for enhancing emergency communications and response.

While funding amounts are distributed on a competitive basis, final awards are not automatic and are contingent upon:

- 1) the submission of a completed application that meets the Eligibility Criteria set in this RFA, and
- 2) an executed grant agreement.

This document contains information about the program rules and requirements, the types of expenses eligible for funding, and instructions for completing and submitting the grant application.

The program is open to schools and public safety communications system owners.

**The authority to administer this grant program rests with the Office of School Safety (OSS), Office of Grants Management, including amendments, alterations, or changes to these guidelines and award distribution.**

## 1.2 Timeline

Announcement and Application Guidebook	April 1,2025
Application Submission Deadline	May 13, 2025
Notification of Funding Recommendations	June 10,2025
Requests for Reconsiderations	June 17,2025

## 1.3 Issue/Problem Statement

This funding announcement is in response to the needs identified by the State Legislators to enhance school safety incident response.

#### 1.4 Purpose of the Funds

The purpose of the grant program is to better serve schools or public safety network owners in the state by providing funds to improve interoperable communications between schools and first responders. Grant recipients may use the money received through the grant program for the following purposes:

1. Deliver training programs to teach district-based security personnel and appropriate school personnel basic procedures for effective communications with first responders.
2. Implement an interoperable technology solution to provide or to upgrade the following:
  - A system or technology that can be activated and deactivated by the public safety 911 answering point, the network administrator, and the school, using both the radio system and other communications networks.
  - Radio and other technology bridge ability that is not radio vendor- specific for connecting independent school networks across the school district and public safety networks in the regions; and
  - An interoperability solution that operates over radio networks and other communications networks.
3. To maintain or improve a school's existing interoperable communication hardware or software or to provide interoperable communication hardware and/or software to a school that does not yet have it; and
4. For any necessary radio system capacity expansions where school loading has been determined to have significant impact on public safety system loading.

#### 1.5 Target Applicants

Applicants must be a school or public safety communications system owner in order to be eligible for these funds.

#### 1.6 Eligible Applicants

Any application that does not address the eligibility requirements listed below will be eliminated from further consideration. To be eligible to apply for and receive grant funding, an applicant must:

1. Submit a complete and accurate application to the Office of School Safety in the form prescribed by the Office on or before May 13, 2025, 5:00PM; and
2. An applicant must be a school or a public safety communications system owner; and
3. Eligible school applicants are required to have a Memorandum of Understanding dated within the last three (3) years with any of its regional public safety 911 answering points or the local law enforcement agency or agencies which serve the school for communications interoperability.
4. Applicants must have current (Dated within the last year) school Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) with current staff contacts included.

Additionally, recipients of the grant agree to provide OSS, upon request at any time during the life of the grant contract, such cooperation and information deemed necessary by the OSS to evaluate the outcome and success of this Program.

### 1.7 Amount Available

This grant program is appropriated from section 24-33.5-2107, C.R.S. For the Fiscal Year 2026 Program, \$5,000,000 has been appropriated. \$4,850,000 is available for recipients of this grant program. The balance of the funds will be utilized by the OSS to manage this grant program.

## 2 APPLICATION GUIDELINES and TEMPLATE

Applicants must submit an electronic copy by **5:00 p.m. MST on May 13, 2025.**

Please email the completed electronic copy of your application to

cdps\_oss\_safer@state.co.us. OSS will review each application for eligibility and

completeness.

Please ensure you are completing the proper application. There are three (3) different application templates including: School application, School District and BOCES application, and a Public Communications System Application

- **School application**- Should be completed by an applicant who is applying for grant funds for a singular school.
- **School District and BOCES application**- Should be completed by an applicant applying for multiple schools, multiple campuses or school districts.
- **Public Communications System Application**- Should be completed by an applicant applying as a public communications systems owner.

Only one application per applicant can be submitted. If multiple applications are submitted by a single applicant, all applications will be rejected. Please ensure that your entities' application is fully complete and accurate. All partially completed applications will be rejected. All information, affirmations, and certifications will be treated as material representations of fact upon which the OSS will rely in awarding grants. The RFA package consists of this grant guidebook and the application templates.

Applicants must complete all sections of the application as described below. Attention should be given to completeness and specificity of the responses. Indicate if a statement or question is not relevant to your agency or application by inputting N/A.

The application templates consist of five sections: Signature Page, Project Narrative, Budget Narrative, Self Risk Assessment and Project Budget.

### 2.1 Applicant Info Signatures Page

***Applicant School (District) Name:*** Enter the legal name of your agency.

***Applicant Agency Type:*** Type of agency that is applying for grant funds.

***Points of Contact:*** Enter all information for all four (4) points of contact; Primary POC, Secondary POC, Official Authorized, and Fiscal Agent. Ensure

each POC signs and dates their section.

**Primary POC:** Main person who will oversee the day-to-day management of the project.

**Secondary POC:** Backup person for the Primary POC.

**Authorized Official:** The individual who is authorized to enter into legal contracts on behalf of the applicant agency. The Authorized Official must be a person other than the project manager or the financial officer.

**Fiscal Agent:** The Financial Officer is the person who will be responsible for fiscal matters relating to the project and is ultimately in charge of accounting, management of funds, verification of expenditures and grant financial reporting. This must be an individual other than the project manager or authorized official.

Please note that the primary POC and Secondary POC must be separate individuals. All information for the contact must be listed, and all individuals must sign the application. Signatures must be a certified electronic signature or wet signature.

## 2.2 Project/ Budget Narrative

Please ensure that you input your entity's name and UEI number in the spaces provided.

1. **Question 1: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):** Does your school/school district have an MOU with its regional public safety 911 answering point or the local law enforcement agency or agencies that serve the school for communications interoperability? This question has a drop down, please select YES or NO  
If yes, please attach a copy of the MOU when you submit your application.

**\*\* A MOU is required as a part of the application.** All MOU's must be updated within the last three years and include current personnel, contacts, and position titles. Failure to submit a MOU will result in the application being ineligible.

**\*\*** If your entity will be proposing a 'cloud connected' silent communications tool that provides broadcast and two-way communication between the classroom and emergency responder system such as red bag, etc. you must include a separate MOU specifically for the use of the system specifying duties and function of all parties Failure to submit a MOU, detailed quotes and a configuration proposal will result in your application being ineligible. (Please see Appendix A: 'cloud connected' communications).

**\*\*** MOU's must list the school and emergency service provider and alongside other emergency partners (i.e. EMS, Fire, etc.).

2. **Questions 2-17:** Answer the questions and provide detailed information. Please adjust the cells to accommodate the length of your response. If your response does not fit appropriately within the area after adjusted, please also submit the question and responses on a separate PDF document. Please put N/A for any question that does not apply to you.
3. **Budget Narrative Tab:** The applicant must provide a detailed explanation of the budgeted items listed in the Project Budget. Describe the criteria used to compute budget figures, all budget figures should be justified and explained. The budget narrative should show the relationship between budget figures and

proposed project operations. If your response does not fit appropriately within the area after adjusted, please also submit the question and responses on a separate PDF document.

Match is not a requirement of this grant. If you choose to include a match, please describe the amount and use of matched funds.

The following information is required for each budget category:

**Training:**

This budget category captures training costs to educate staff on security procedures, school safety best practices, and the use of equipment purchased with grant dollars.

Please provide a description of the training, who will be conducting the training, who will be the recipients of the training, and number of trainings, and all costs associated with trainings.

Please note that monetary incentives to attend training are not an allowable expense.

**Exercise:**

This budget category captures the costs of exercising staff on security procedures, school safety best practices, and the use of equipment purchased with grant dollars.

Please provide a description of the exercises, who will be conducting them, and who will be participating and how often these exercises will be conducted, and all costs associated with the exercises.

**Maintenance:**

Describe the maintenance needed, and the costs that will be associated with the maintenance of the equipment purchased with these grant funds.

**Software/Hardware:**

Describe the costs and quantities of the equipment and software purchased with these grant funds.

If you are applying for multiple projects please organize the budget narrative by separating each project's expenses.

4. **Question 3- Total Requested Amount:** Enter the total requested amount for all projects.

2.3 **Project Budget**

The budget must be completed entirely and each item listed should be accompanied by a narrative (on the narrative tab) which provides a detailed justification for the budget items and details the basis for determining the cost of each item. The budget must cover the entire project duration. In figuring the budget, work with **whole dollar numbers only**.

When necessary, round to the next highest whole dollar amount. The budget should be broken into categories, such as, Training, Exercise, Maintenance, Software and Hardware. If there are multiple projects, under Project # heading, use drop down to identify the different projects. **Please place projects in the order of priority.**

**Project #:** Select from dropdown, project #1, project #2, etc. **Category:** Select the category that best describes the activity. **Activity/Item**

**Description:** Enter a short description of the activity/item.

**Quantity:** Enter quantity to be purchased.

**Unit Cost:** Enter the unit cost.

The Subtotal and Total fields will auto populate.

The information outlined in the Project and Budget Narrative should match the information listed in the Project Budget.

#### 2.4 **Self Risk Assessment Tool**

The Self Risk assessment should be completed with transparency to accurately determine the agency's capacity to successfully oversee and implement the grant program. Please complete Section A and Section B. For more information please refer to Appendix B.

### 3 **ADMINISTRATION OF GRANT CONTRACTS**

The OSS will execute a grant contract with an awardee based on the contents of the submitted application and the intent of the grant program as outlined in this RFA.

The grant contract will include standard State terms and conditions.

#### 3.1 **Issuing Agency**

These grant program funds are issued by the State of Colorado, Colorado Department of Public Safety, Office of School Safety (OSS).

The OSS is the sole point of contact concerning these funds and all communications must be made through the Office of School Safety.

Failure to submit a complete application or any requested documents may result in denial of funding. Part of the application submission process will be to attach needed documents. See Section 4 for a complete list of attachments.

#### 3.2 **Requirements and Restrictions**

Applicants must be a school, school district, or public safety communications systems owner.

#### 3.3 **Authorized Program Expenditures**

Funding under the program may be used for costs related to the Grant Objectives and Program Goals. OSS has sole discretion in determining which costs are permissible.

Permissible costs include, but are not limited to, the categories listed below:

1. Delivering training programs to teach district-based security personnel and appropriate school personnel basic procedures for effective communications with first responders during an emergency. Researching, developing, delivering, and evaluating training - Including costs related to administering the training, planning, scheduling, facilities, materials, supplies, and equipment. Incentives for staff to attend training can not be covered by this grant.
2. The implementation of an interoperable technology solution to provide or to upgrade the following:
  - A system or technology that can be activated and deactivated by the



public safety 911 answering point, the network administrator, and the school using both the radio system and other communication networks.

- Radio and other technology bridge ability that is not radio vendor specific for connecting independent school networks across the school district and public safety networks in the regions; and
  - An interoperability solution that operates over radio networks and other communications networks
3. To maintain or improve a schools' existing interoperable communication hardware or software or to provide interoperable communication hardware and/or software to a school that does not yet have it.
  4. Other costs associated with program-related expenses.
  5. For any necessary radio system capacity expansions where school loading has been determined to have significant impact on public safety systems.

Salaries, overtime, fringe benefits, travel, staff incentives or other expenses associated with existing or on-going operations that are not related to this grant program are not allowed. Additionally, dual compensation is not allowed.

### 3.4 Reporting Requirements

The OSS requires quarterly reports which document the project's progress toward meeting its goals and objectives, and its expenditures under the approved budget. All quarterly reports are due by the 30<sup>th</sup> day following each calendar quarter.

### 3.5 Funding Decision Criteria

The OSS will review and judge the proposals received based on their adherence to the factors stated in this guide. Failure of the applicant to provide any information requested in the application announcement or instructions may result in disqualification of the application. In addition to other considerations, the following criteria will be evaluated in awarding the grant:

1. The likelihood that funding of the application will improve communications between the school and first responder communication systems.
2. The extent to which the school is fully compliant with the Colorado School Response Framework pursuant to section 22-32-109.1 (4) OR 22-30.5-503;
3. Whether the school has a crisis management plan in place with safety team members designated for communications with first responders.

Additionally, OSS will review the application in relation to the following subjects:

**Issue Statement:** The problem or issue to be addressed is clearly documented with relevant data and analysis substantiated by reference to research literature and/or documented prior program experience.

**Project Description:** Specific project activities and services to be developed and/or provided are clearly described. Program characteristics and features that will ensure project success are clearly identified. The project and associated costs are clearly defined.

**Population to be Served:** The applicant describes the goals and target population to be served.

**Goals and Objectives:** Applicant addresses how they will accomplish their stated goals and

objectives, number of customers they intend to serve, and clearly describes the types of services which will be provided. Goal statements provide an overall understanding of the impact the project will have on the identified issue/problem.

Objectives are clear, complete, concise, realistic, measurable, and relate to the goal statement. Outcomes are described in measurable terms.

**Quality Assurance Plan:** Define the outcome, impact, or product you intend to achieve and/or develop. Explain how you will document the progress on your objectives and explain how you will measure the degree to which your grant-funded activities are achieving the intended outcome, impact, or product.

**Collaboration:** Project/program actively collaborates with other agencies and groups in the communities for purposes of resource sharing, coordination of efforts and addresses duplication of services. Evidence is provided of past successful collaboration projects.

**Budget and Budget Narrative:** The budget is reasonable, necessary, and efficient to complete this project. The budget document is completed with accuracy, including a budget narrative that describes in detail all project costs listed on the budget page. The OSS may fund those applicants whose proposals meet the goals of the grant program. Please read and respond to each section and question to thoroughly demonstrate your agency's needs.

**Self-Risk Assessment:** Risk Assessments allow the awardee to make informed decisions when funding applicants by evaluating the likelihood of risk and their potential impact on the grant objectives and goals. The Self Risk Assessment must be completed and submitted with the SAFER Application.

### 3.6 Reconsideration Process

Selection criteria will be strictly adhered to, and some requests may not be funded. Any applicant receiving notification of a denial of funding may exercise its right to request reconsideration if done so within six calendar days after receipt of the denial notification. The OSS will make a final decision based on the request for reconsideration. Any applicant requesting reconsideration must submit, in writing, all rebuttal information with the request for reconsideration to the OSS. Reviews will be limited to the reasons, documented in the notification letter, for which the application was denied. In all cases, the decision of the OSS will be final.

### 3.7 Rejection of Proposals

The OSS reserves the right to reject any applications, to waive informalities and minor irregularities in the applications received and to accept any portion of the application for funding if deemed to be in the interest of the State of Colorado. The OSS reserves the option of holding for further consideration those applications with merit which were not funded. Any further consideration is dependent upon the availability of funds.

### 3.8 General Specifications

By submitting the application, the applicant attests that:

- 1) Applicant's signatory contact person has the authority to submit on behalf of the applicant's organization.
- 2) Submission of an application indicates the applicant's acceptance of all conditions and terms contained in this document, and all other terms and conditions of the award contract.
- 3) Recipients of the grant program must adhere to, and be in full compliance with any, resulting grant contract, and relevant State policies and regulations.

### 3.9 Special Conditions

- 1) All recipients funded through this grant program agree to provide OSS, upon request at any time during the life of the grant contract, such cooperation and information deemed necessary by OSS.
- 2) Failure to comply with any of the requirements, as listed above, may result in sanctions up to and including the immediate suspension and/or revocation of the grant award. Failure to comply may also result in disqualification from future award opportunities.

## 4 Attachments

Attach the following document(s):

1. Completed application (Including an electronic certified signature or wet signature) Excel version and a PDF version
2. A copy of your organization's MOU (See instructions for time restrictions)
3. 'Cloud Connected' Communications MOU (if applicable)
4. 'Cloud Connected' Communications Implementation and Configuration Proposal (if applicable)
5. A copy of the schools' crisis management plan (Emergency Operations Plan) ( See instructions for time restrictions)
6. A copy of your organization's recently signed current W-9
7. OSS Self-Risk Assessment (Excel Document)

## 5 Questions

Questions regarding the School Access for Emergency Response Grant Program (SB 18- 158) should be directed to the following email address: [cdps\\_oss\\_safer@state.co.us](mailto:cdps_oss_safer@state.co.us) Please check the website [OSS.colorado.gov](http://OSS.colorado.gov) frequently for any updates.

For any technical assistance completing your application, please reach out to the Grants team at [cdps\\_oss\\_safer@state.co.us](mailto:cdps_oss_safer@state.co.us)

## 6 Appendix A: 'Cloud Connected' Communications

'Cloud Connected' Communications have become increasingly popular. 'Cloud Connected' Communications and 'cloud connected' silent communications are tools that provide broadcast and two-way communication between the classroom and emergency responder system. These systems with proper configuration communicate with emergency responders and allow a two-way dissemination of information.

Due to the broad scope of 'Cloud Connected' Communications software and the inoperability being based solely on the systems configuration, there are additional items needed at the time of application for the system to be considered for funding.

1. An implementation and configuration proposal is required to be submitted as an additional attachment to the application. This will be separate from the implementation plan.
2. Only the communication and training related to the communications portion of the services and/or goods are an allowable expense on the SAFER grant.
3. You must include a separate MOU specifically for the use of the 'cloud connected'

communications system specifying duties and functions of all parties. (i.e. if the system requires all emails of the local emergency response team be entered for them to have access to the system they must be included in the MOU and all communication policies and procedures of that individual’s entity must be followed).

4. Due to inoperability being based solely on the systems configurations you must include a quote and configuration proposals. The quotes should include all costs associated with the 'cloud connected' communications system, including descriptions for each cost. The configuration proposal documents should be a very detailed document that illustrates how the entity plans to implement and configure the system ( i.e. if the system requires all emails of the local emergency response team be entered for them to have access to the system these must be included in the document).

## 7 Appendix B: Self-Risk Assessment Tool Guide

For the School Access for Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Program

### **Purpose of the self risk assessment tool**

The Self-Risk assessment tool is designed to evaluate the financial and administrative capacity of grant applicants. It ensures that applicants have the necessary controls and processes to manage federally and state funded grant programs effectively. The tool helps identify potential risks and determine appropriate levels of oversight.

### **Instructions for Completing the Risk Assessment Tool**

1. Applicant Information (Section A)
  - Provide the applicant name, grant program name, grant amount requested, and date of submission.
2. Assessment Tool (Section B)
  - For each question, select Yes, No, or N/A from the drop-down menu
  - Each “Yes” response earns one point, while “ No” or “N/A” responses receive 0 points
  - Use the comments column to provide explanation or additional context where needed

### **Scoring and Risk Level determination**

The total risk score is calculated based on the number of yes, responses. The risk level is determined as follows.

Total Risk Score	Risk Level
Score less than 4	High risk (Red)
Score 4-11	Medium risk (Yellow)
Score 11+	Low risk: (Green)

### **Appendix Summary**

The Self-Risk Assessment Tool is a critical component of the SAFER Grant Program, helping to ensure responsible financial stewardship of grant funds. Applicants should complete this assessment thoroughly to demonstrate their capability to manage grant funding efficiently.

## 8 **Appendix C: BOCES, School District and Multiple Campuses**

In addition to the requirements listed in Section 2: Application and Guidelines Template, please complete the BOCES and School District application with the following additional information.

### **General Instructions**

- Ensure that all requested information is accurate, clearly written, and directly related to the grant's objectives.
- Double check all budget calculations to ensure consistency across all budget related sections.
- Any incomplete or incorrect applications may be subject to rejection.
- Please follow the instructions listed in the sections and questions.

### **Budget Narrative**

The budget narrative should clearly demonstrate the calculations and use of funds for all schools, campuses and school districts that will be served.

- If the prospective project will serve multiple schools within a single district, or multiple campuses under one organization's name, each school's project budget is required to be listed separately.
- If you are a BOCES serving multiple districts, it is not necessary to list the schools individually. Please list each district's project budget. When listing, clearly identify how many schools within each district are included in the district's projected budget.

**Question 1-** Match is not a requirement of this grant. If you choose to include a match, please describe the amount and use of matched funds.

**Question 2-** Please provide a budget narrative clearly demonstrating the use of funds. Please separate the funding as stated above.

**Question 3-** Please combine the budget for all projects and list the total amount of requested funding.

### **Project Budget Itemization**

Please provide individual itemized budgets for each school, campus, and/or district.

- If the prospective project will serve multiple schools within a single district, or multiple campuses under one organization's name, each school's project budget is required to be listed separately.
- If you are a BOCES serving multiple districts, it is not necessary to list the schools individually. Please list each district's project budget. When listing, please clearly identify how many schools within each district are included in the district's projected budget.

When necessary, round to the next highest whole dollar amount. The budget should be broken into categories, such as, Training, Exercise, Maintenance, Software and Hardware.

If there are multiple projects, under Project # heading, use drop down to identify the different projects. **Please place projects in the order of priority.**

**Project #:** Select from dropdown, project #1, project #2, etc.

**Category:** Select the category that best describes the activity.

**Activity/Item Description:** Enter a short description of the activity/item.

**Quantity:** Enter quantity to be purchased.

**Unit Cost:** Enter the unit cost.

The Subtotal and Total fields will auto populate.

The information outlined in the Project and Budget Narrative should match the information listed in the Project Budget.

### **Project Budget Summary**

- Please summarize all requested funds by combining amounts for all schools, campuses and/or school districts into the respective budget category. The summary total should coincide with the totals listed in the Budget narrative and Project Budget Itemization tabs

The OSS reserves the right to reject any applications, to waive informalities and minor irregularities in the applications received and to accept any portion of the application for funding if deemed to be in the interest of the State of Colorado. The OSS reserves the option of holding for further consideration those applications with merit which were not funded. Any further consideration is dependent upon the availability of funds.

## **9 Appendix D: Public Safety Communication System Owners**

In addition to the requirements listed in *Section 2: Application and Guidelines Template*, please complete the Public Safety Communication System Owners application with the following additional information.

### **General Instructions**

- Ensure that all requested information is accurate, clearly written, and directly related to the grant's objectives.
- Double check all budget calculations to ensure consistency across all budget related sections.
- Any incomplete or incorrect applications may be subject to rejection.
- Please follow the instructions listed in the sections and questions.

### **Budget Narrative**

**Question 1 - Please provide a descriptive budget narrative that clearly illustrates the use of funds the schools and/or schools districts to be served.**

**Question 2-** Please combine the budget for all projects and list the total amount of requested funding.

### **Project Budget**

The budget must be completed entirely and each item listed should be accompanied by a narrative (on the narrative tab) which provides a detailed justification for the budget items and details the basis for determining the cost of

each item. The budget must cover the entire project duration. In figuring the budget, work with **whole dollar numbers only**.

When necessary, round to the next highest whole dollar amount. The budget should be broken into categories, such as, Training, Exercise, Maintenance, Software and Hardware. If there are multiple projects, under Project # heading, use drop down to identify the different projects. **Please place projects in the order of priority.**

**Project #:** Select from dropdown, project #1, project #2, etc.

**Category:** Select the category that best describes the activity.

**Activity/Item Description:** Enter a short description of the activity/item.

**Quantity:** Enter quantity to be purchased.

**Unit Cost:** Enter the unit cost.

The Subtotal and Total fields will auto populate.

The information outlined in the Project and Budget Narrative should match the information listed in the Project Budget.

The OSS reserves the right to reject any applications, to waive informalities and minor irregularities in the applications received and to accept any portion of the application for funding if deemed to be in the interest of the State of Colorado. The OSS reserves the option of holding for further consideration those applications with merit which were not funded. Any further consideration is dependent upon the availability of funds.