United States General Accounting Office

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary and the Chairman, Subcommittee on Administrative Oversight and the Courts, Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate

October 1995

COMMUNITY POLICING

Information on the "COPS on the Beat" Grant Programs

GAO/GGD-96-4

GAO

United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

General Government Division

B-261200

October 25, 1995

The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch
Chairman, Committee on the
Judiciary
United States Senate

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Chairman, Subcommittee on Administrative
Oversight and the Courts
Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate

This report responds to your April 3, 1995, request that we review various aspects of the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program, "Cops on the Beat." As agreed with the Committee and Subcommittee, we are providing a description of the grant application, selection, and monitoring processes for the COPS: Phase I, COPS Funding Accelerated for Smaller Towns (FAST), and COPS Accelerated Hiring, Education, and Deployment (AHEAD) programs. We are also providing for the COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD programs a comparison of the crime rates in applicant and nonapplicant jurisdictions, the reasons some jurisdictions chose not to apply for COPS program grants, and the public safety issues identified by a sample of jurisdictions applying for COPS FAST grants.

At the Committee's request, we conducted telephone interviews of a random sample of 289 nonapplicant jurisdictions to find out why they did not apply for a grant. In addition, we reviewed a random sample of 207 COPS FAST approved applications to determine public safety issues identified by applicant jurisdictions. Appendix I contains the details of our objectives, scope, and methodology.

Background

Community policing is generally defined as a shift in police efforts from a solely reactive response to crime to also proactively working with residents to prevent crime. Citizens, police departments, and other agencies are to work together to identify problems and apply appropriate problem-solving strategies. The practice of community policing began to emerge in the late 1970s. The Department of Justice (DOJ) has supported community policing efforts through various implementation and research grants for about the last 15 years.

The Public Safety Partnership and Community Policing Act of 1994 (Community Policing Act)—Title I of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994[1]—authorizes DOJ to make grants for the hiring or rehiring of law enforcement officers to participate in community policing. In addition, the Community Policing Act authorizes DOJ to award grants for the purchase of equipment, technology, and support systems if the expenditures would result in an increase in the number of officers deployed in community-oriented policing. It also authorizes grants for other programs such as providing specialized training to enhance skills needed to work in partnership with members of the community. The purposes of the grants are to increase police presence, expand and improve cooperative efforts between law enforcement agencies and members of the community to address crime and disorder problems, and otherwise enhance public safety.

The Community Policing Act authorizes $8.8 billion in grants over a 6-year period to states, local governments, Indian tribal governments, other public and private entities, and multijurisdictional or regional consortia. Fiscal year 1995 appropriated funds for the Community Policing Act totaled $1.3 billion. The President's fiscal year 1996 budget requests about $1.9 billion for public safety and community policing grants.

DOJ has used three programs to date—COPS: Phase I, COPS FAST, and COPS AHEAD—as part of its efforts to increase by 100,000 the number of sworn law enforcement officers over current levels by providing community policing grants. COPS: Phase I was open only to jurisdictions not funded due to a scarcity of funds under DOJ's 1993-1994 Police Hiring Supplement Program (PHSP).[2] COPS FAST is open to state, local, and other public enforcement agencies, Indian tribal governments, other public and private entities, and multijurisdictional or regional consortia that employ sworn law enforcement officers and that serve populations under 50,000. COPS AHEAD is open to those agencies serving populations of 50,000 or more.

DOJ community policing guidelines provide that jurisdictions that had received COPS: Phase I funding were also eligible to receive additional funding under COPS AHEAD if the combined hiring under both programs did

[1]Public Law 103-322.

[2]DOJ created the PHSP in response to congressional passage of the Supplemental Appropriation Act of 1993 that provided $150 million to help pay for the salaries and fringe benefits of additional law enforcement officers.

not exceed 3 percent of the actual October 1, 1994, total police force level.[3] In addition, an agency that received funding under COPS: Phase I is eligible to receive additional funding under COPS FAST. DOJ has also announced additional programs.[4]

The guidelines also stipulate that federal grant funds awarded under the COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD programs cannot exceed 75 percent of the total salary and benefits of each officer up to a maximum of $75,000 per officer for a 3-year period. Grantees are required to provide at least 25 percent of officer costs and commit to retaining new officers after the grant expires.

Results in Brief

The grant application and selection process for the COPS: Phase I program differed from that for COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD. COPS: Phase I grants were awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), which utilized a traditional competitive process. DOJ created the COPS Office to award Community Policing Act grants including COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD grants. This office instituted a noncompetitive, two-step application and selection process to allow officers to be hired more quickly. The COPS Office is to monitor grants awarded under all three programs.

Overall, the higher the crime rate, the more likely a jurisdiction was to apply for a COPS grant. About 92 percent of jurisdictions that applied for a grant received initial approval —93 percent of COPS FAST applicants and 74 percent of COPS AHEAD applicants.

The primary reasons jurisdictions we contacted chose not to apply for COPS grants were cost related. Specifically, these jurisdictions expressed uncertainty about being able to continue officer funding after the grant expired and about their ability to provide the required 25-percent match.

Property crimes and domestic violence were the most frequently included crimes in the top five public safety issues among approved COPS FAST applicants. In addition, about half or more of COPS FAST applicants ranked alcohol-related crimes, drug crimes, vandalism, and violent crimes against persons among their top five public safety issues.

[3]According to the DOJ COPS Office Assistant Director for Grants Administration, based on the overwhelming number of letters of intent received, the COPS Office decided that COPS AHEAD would fund 2.5 percent rather than 3 percent of sworn personnel as of October 1, 1994.

[4]These additional programs include COPS Making Officer Redeployment Effective (MORE) and Troops-to-COPS. COPS MORE is designed to expand the time available for community policing by current law enforcement officers, rather than fund the hiring or rehiring of additional law enforcement officers. Troops-to-Cops grants may be used to hire former members of the Armed Forces to serve as career law enforcement officers for deployment in community policing.

Grant Award and Oversight Process for COPS: Phase I, COPS FAST, and COPS AHEAD

The application and selection processes varied somewhat between the COPS: Phase I program and the COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD programs because they were administered differently by separate offices within DOJ. BJA administered the application and selection of COPS: Phase I awards. The Attorney General created a separate office, the COPS Office, to administer the Community Policing Act grants. This office designed the application and selection processes for the COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD grants. The COPS Office is to monitor the grants awarded under all three programs.

The Community Policing Act requires that each application (1) include, among other things, a long-term community policing strategy and a detailed implementation plan; (2) demonstrate a specific public safety need; and (3) explain the applicant's inability to meet its public safety needs without federal assistance. The act makes special provisions for applications of local government or law enforcement agencies in jurisdictions with populations of less than 50,000 and for nonpolice hiring grants[5] of less than $1 million by allowing the Attorney General to waive one or more of the grant application requirements and to facilitate the submission, processing, and approval of these applications.

Application Process for COPS: Phase I Differed From the Process for COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD Grants

The difference in the application process between COPS: Phase I and COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD grants is the stage at which jurisdictions could begin recruiting and hiring additional officers. In the traditional grant process used for COPS: Phase I, jurisdictions submitted a detailed application to BJA for review and waited for final grant approval and award before beginning officer recruitment, hiring, and training. For the COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD grant programs, the COPS Office implemented a two-step application process that allowed jurisdictions to recruit, hire, and train officers while final grant applications were being reviewed.

In response to a suggestion from the U.S. Conference of Mayors to expedite the grant application process for the COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD programs, the COPS Office designed a two-step application process to try to get new officers on the street months earlier than they would be under traditional grant award processes. First, for COPS AHEAD, the COPS Office used a one-page initial application to determine the number of officers jurisdictions could recruit and train. Approved jurisdictions were notified of proposed funding levels, cautioned that the funding was tentative, and warned that if the subsequent application was not approved, the COPS

[5]According to the COPS Office, nonpolice hiring grants are to provide funds for innovative community policing programs, technology and equipment, and the development and establishment of new police administrative and managerial systems.

Office would not be held liable for officers hired. In COPS FAST, grant decisions were made based upon one-page applications. Second, the selected jurisdictions in both programs were to submit additional information to the COPS Office prior to issuance of formal awards. COPS AHEAD agencies were asked to submit detailed applications, while COPS FAST supplied brief budget and community policing information.

The type of information and amount of detail required in this second application differed between COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD programs. COPS FAST applicants were allowed to provide less detailed information because the Attorney General waived certain requirements for communities serving under 50,000 residents.

Selection Process for COPS: Phase I Differed From Process for COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD Grants

BJA awarded the COPS: Phase I grants based primarily on public safety need, while the COPS Office used commitment to community policing as the primary eligibility criterion for the COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD grants. COPS: Phase I grantees were competitively selected on the basis of the following five criteria used for PHSP applicants: (1) public safety need (40 percent), (2) community policing strategy (30 percent), (3) implementation plan (10 percent), (4) continuation and retention plan (10 percent), and (5) additional resource commitments (10 percent).

The eligible jurisdictions for COPS: Phase I were those 2,507 jurisdictions that applied for the 1993-1994 PHSP but did not receive funding. BJA considered applications from both traditional law enforcement jurisdictions—such as municipal, county, and state police—and special law enforcement jurisdictions—such as airports, parks, and transit authorities. A BJA official said that most of the COPS: Phase I applicants demonstrating a high or moderate need based on the above five factors received funding. In addition, 16 jurisdictions received waivers of the local match requirement after demonstrating extraordinary economic hardships.

The Assistant Director for Grants Administration said the intent of the COPS Office was to award COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD grants to as many applicant jurisdictions as funds allowed. However, after receiving more applications than it had expected—about 8,000 of the approximately 15,000 law enforcement jurisdictions applied—the COPS Office decided to

consider in COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD only applications from traditional law enforcement jurisdictions.[6]

Jurisdictions with satisfactory COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD applications were approved for funds based on the number of officers on board on October 1, 1994. About 92 percent of jurisdictions that applied for a COPS grant received initial award approval. COPS Office staff said that if an application was incomplete, a COPS Office grant adviser contacted a local official for further information. In some cases, jurisdictions were referred for technical assistance to help them plan and implement a community policing strategy. On July 1, 1995, the COPS Office and the Community Policing Consortium[7] entered into a cooperative agreement for the provision of certain training and technical assistance services.

Table 1 shows the authorized hiring scale for approved jurisdictions.

Table 1: Authorized Hiring Levels for COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD Jurisdictions

Number of officers currently on force	Maximum number of officers authorized to be hired under the COPS Program
Less than 50	1
50 to 100	2
More than 100	2.5% of force[a]

[a]As of Oct. 1, 1994.

Source: DOJ.

Table 2 summarizes information about the grant application and selection process for the three COPS programs.

[6]The COPS Office concluded that a more thorough review of community policing activities and plans in special jurisdictions would be necessary but was not plausible under the expedited processes for COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD programs. Similarly, guidelines for COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD did not permit waivers of the 25-percent local match. According to the Assistant Director for Grants Administration, this was because more extensive review was necessary to verify any extraordinary economic hardships cited by the jurisdiction. The special police jurisdictions will be eligible for future COPS programs funded later this year, and requests for waivers are also to be considered.

[7]Established and funded by BJA, the Community Policing Consortium includes representatives from the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Sheriffs' Association, the Police Executive Research Forum, the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, and the Police Foundation. The consortium's task is to provide technical assistance and assist agencies in implementing community policing.

Table 2: Information Relating to the COPS Grants Application and Selection Processes

	Program		
	COPS: Phase I	COPS FAST	COPS AHEAD
	Competitive	Noncompetitive	Noncompetitive
Type of grant / Target population	Nonselected PHSP applicants	Jurisdictions under 50,000	Jurisdictions of 50,000 or more
Number of jurisdictions eligible to apply	2,507[a]	14,400	908
Number of applications	2,507[a]	7,169	799
Number that received grant approval letters[b]	392	6,656	632
Number that received waiver of local match requirement	16	N/A	N/A
Number that withdrew application after receiving initial approval	16	30	31
Number of detailed applications received	2,507	6,679[c]	508[c]
Number of officers funded[c]	2,559	7,115	4,197
Number of officers hired[c]	1,209	1,800	1,770

N/A = Not applicable to this program because the COPS Office did not consider requests for waivers of the 25-percent local match for COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD grants.

[a]These included PHSP applicants that applied for but did not receive PHSP funding.

[b]For the COPS: Phase I program, these were final grant awards. For COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD, these were preliminary approvals contingent on approval of the jurisdictions' detailed applications.

[c]Numbers are as of May 15, 1995.

Source: DOJ and GAO analysis of COPS Office and 1993 Uniform Crime Report (UCR) data.

The COPS Office Is to Monitor and Evaluate the Three Grant Programs

The Attorney General established the COPS Office to administer all Community Policing Act grants, including monitoring and evaluation to assess the financial and programmatic impact of the grants. Grantees are required to submit progress and accounting reports and are to be contacted periodically by telephone. Some of the financial monitoring is to be done by DOJ's Office of Justice Programs (OJP). An intra-agency agreement between the COPS Office and OJP allows OJP to provide certain accounting and financial monitoring to track grantee compliance with audit requirements, as well as prepare financial status reports.

According to the Assistant Director for Grants Administration, the frequency and extent of evaluation to assess a jurisdiction's grant implementation process will depend on the amount of the grant award, with the level of scrutiny increasing for larger awards. A COPS FAST jurisdiction, for example, which received a grant award for only one law enforcement officer—about 6,200 jurisdictions—is to receive a minimum of telephone contacts and have its periodic progress reports reviewed. A COPS AHEAD jurisdiction, however, which may have received funding for a large number of officers, should expect site visits, frequent telephone contacts, and close review of its community policing efforts through its periodic progress reports. COPS Office staff said that each jurisdiction is to complete periodic progress reports that will outline information on each officer hired and the specific activities and achievements of its community policing program. The COPS Office is to conduct evaluations to review how the jurisdiction interacts with the community, what kind of training is provided to officers and residents, and what specific strategies are used to prevent crime.

The COPS Office is to select a sample of jurisdictions for continuous impact evaluations. The Policy Support and Evaluation Unit within the COPS Office is to conduct these evaluations. DOJ's National Institute of Justice is also expected to conduct impact evaluations. Impact evaluations are to be conducted on fewer sites than the process evaluations and are to assess how the quality of life in the community has been affected by community policing efforts. The COPS Office is to examine, for example, crime and arrest data, victimization surveys, and citizen surveys to evaluate the impact of the grants. The periodic progress reports are also to be used to evaluate the impact of the grants.

The Higher the Crime Rate, the More Likely a Jurisdiction Was to Apply for a COPS Grant

We estimated that about 42 percent of all law enforcement jurisdictions applied for a COPS FAST or COPS AHEAD grant. Jurisdictions eligible for a COPS AHEAD grant were much more likely to apply than were jurisdictions eligible for a COPS FAST grant. About 81 percent of the jurisdictions eligible for the COPS AHEAD program applied; about 49 percent of those eligible for a COPS FAST grant applied. However, regardless of the program, generally, the higher the crime rate, the more likely a jurisdiction was to apply for a grant. Table 3 shows the application rates for law enforcement jurisdictions by program eligibility and number of crimes reported per 1,000 population served. Crimes reported in the 1993 UCR included violent crimes of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery,

and aggravated assault and the property crimes of burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft.

Table 3: Application Rates for COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD Grants

Number of crimes reported per 1,000 population	COPS FAST[a]		COPS AHEAD[a]		Grand Total	
	Percent applying	Number of eligible jurisdictions	Percent applying	Number of eligible jurisdictions	Percent applying	Number of jurisdictions
Under 25	39.0%	4,708	62.8%	199	40.0%	4,907
25 - <50	53.9	2,838	83.9	248	56.3	3,086
50 - <70	58.8	1,003	82.5	154	62.0	1,157
70 and above	60.0	915	92.5	200	65.8	1,115
Missing UCR data on population[b]	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5.7	3,487
Missing UCR data on number of crimes	51.1	4,936	87.9	107	33.0	5,043
Total	**48.8%**	**14,400**	**81.4%**	**908**	**42.4%**	**18,795**

[a]Our determination of program eligibility for nonapplicant jurisdictions is based on whether the UCR data showed a population of less than 50,000 or 50,000 and over. The 1993 UCR data and the COPS Office data showed consistent population classification for 98.5 percent of the applicants (all but 30 COPS FAST applicants and 83 COPS AHEAD applicants).

[b]Jurisdictions (e.g., special police, some sheriffs, or state police) that overlap other reporting jurisdictions are not assigned population in the UCR database.

Source: GAO analysis of COPS Office and 1993 UCR data.

As previously mentioned, an estimated 92 percent of all jurisdictions that applied for a COPS FAST or COPS AHEAD grant received one. The eligibility criteria for these grant programs included the jurisdiction's commitment to community policing, the type of law enforcement jurisdiction, population, and number of sworn officers on the force. Overall, jurisdictions with populations of less than 50,000 were more likely to receive a COPS grant than were larger jurisdictions. Approximately 93 percent of COPS FAST applicants were accepted, while about 74 percent of the jurisdictions applying for a COPS AHEAD grant were accepted (see table 4). We found no relation between crime rates and whether an applicant jurisdiction was awarded the grant. Table 4 shows the disposition of applications for jurisdictions by program and crime rate.

Table 4: Disposition of Applications for COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD Grants

Number of crimes reported per 1,000 population	COPS FAST			
	Number of grant applicants	Percent		
		Initial grant approval[a]	Ineligible[b]	Withdrew[c]
Under 25	1,837	98.6%	0.2%	0.9%
25 -<50	1,529	98.7	0.1	0.9
50 -<70	590	99.0	.0	0.7
70 and above	549	98.7	.0	1.1
Missing[e]	2,664	82.5	16.4	0.4
Total	**7,169**	**92.7%**	**6.2%**	**0.7%**

COPS AHEAD				Grand Total			
	Percent				Percent		
Number of grant applicants	Initial grant approval[a]	Ineligible[d]	Withdrew[c]	Number of grant applicants	Initial grant approval[a]	Ineligible[d]	Withdrew[c]
125	71.2%	17.6%	9.6%	1,962	96.9%	1.3%	1.5%
208	84.1	7.2	7.2	1,737	96.9	1.0	1.6
127	87.4	5.5	6.3	717	96.9	1.0	1.7
185	79.5	13.0	7.6	734	93.9	3.3	2.7
154	44.8	50.0	5.2	2,818	80.4	18.2	0.6
799	**74.0%**	**18.3%**	**7.1%**	**7,968**	**90.8%**	**7.4%**	**1.3%**

Note: Percents may not add to 100 due to several reasons, such as an incomplete application, applications not submitted on time, and applications for which the award decision was unknown.

[a]Does not include jurisdictions that withdrew after being initially awarded a grant.

[b]Applicants were deemed ineligible if they applied to the wrong grant program, were a special law enforcement jurisdiction, or were planning to use the grant to start a police department.

[c]Withdrawals included jurisdictions that withdrew before award notification and jurisdictions that withdrew after being initially awarded a grant.

[d]Applicants were deemed ineligible if they applied to the wrong grant program, received a COPS: Phase I grant that increased the total number of officers to exceed 2.5 percent of sworn personnel as of October 1, 1994, were a special law enforcement jurisdiction, or were planning to use the grant to start a police department.

[e]Includes jurisdictions assigned zero population in the UCR that applied to the grant program.

Source: GAO analysis of COPS Office and 1993 UCR data.

Cost Factors Were the Primary Reason Jurisdictions Chose Not to Apply

At the Committee's request, we conducted telephone interviews with a random sample of 289 nonapplicant jurisdictions to find out why they did not apply for a grant.[8] From our telephone survey, we estimated that 62 percent (plus or minus 11 percent)[9] of the nonapplicant jurisdictions did not apply for a COPS FAST or COPS AHEAD grant due to cost-related factors. For the following question: "How important was each of the following reasons in your agency's decision to not apply for a COPS program grant?", we asked respondents to assign one of five levels of

[8]We did not undertake to determine whether any of the 289 nonapplicant jurisdictions surveyed subsequently applied for funding under other COPS programs.

[9]Because the telephone survey results come from a sample of nonapplicants, all results are subject to sampling errors. For the 62-percent estimate, the 95-percent confidence interval of plus or minus 11 percent indicates that we are 95-percent confident that the interval from 51 to 73 percent includes the actual percentage considering cost-related factors. All of the results in this report for this survey have 95-percent confidence intervals of less than plus or minus 12 percent.

importance to each of five reasons.[10] Next, we asked respondents to indicate the most important reason for not applying. We also allowed respondents to identify any other reasons that affected their jurisdiction's decision.

The estimated 62 percent included about 40 percent (plus or minus 12 percent) of nonapplicants who said uncertainty about the jurisdiction's ability to meet the requirement for continued officer funding after the 3-year grant period was the most important reason for not applying. An additional 18 percent cited the 25-percent local match requirement as the most important reason in their decision; 4 percent cited other financial reasons. An additional 8 percent said the jurisdiction did not apply either because of a lack of information on the grants or because of problems meeting the application deadlines, 3 percent mentioned local political or management decisions, and 4 percent cited various other reasons. In addition, some respondents cited the inadequacy of the $25,000 per year per officer grant to cover the full cost of new officers. According to DOJ's Bureau of Justice Statistics, average starting salaries for entry level officers range from $18,710 to $26,560, with average operating expenditures per officer ranging from $31,500 to $63,400. Table 5 summarizes the results of the importance ratings.

[10]The five levels of importance were "very greatly important," "very important," "moderately important," "somewhat important," and "of little or no importance." The five reasons were "the requirement for continued funding for the officer(s) after the federal grant expired," "did not need additional officers," "the federal grant paperwork requirements were too burdensome," "the federal grant regulations for use of the funds were too restrictive," and "the requirement for 25-percent local matching funds."

Table 5: Reasons Rated as Most Important in Jurisdictions' Decision Not to Apply for a COPS Grant

	Jurisdictions rating reason as most important for not applying	
	Estimated number	Percent
Reason		
Cost-related factors	4,215	62.2%
Could not ensure continued funding	2,745	40.5%
Could not meet 25% match requirement	1,198	17.7
Other cost reasons	272	4.0
Regulations for use of funds too restrictive	576	8.5
Lack of Information/deadlines	572	8.4
Did not need additional officers	501	7.4
Other reasons	265	3.9
Political/city decision	206	3.0
Paperwork requirements too burdensome	153	2.3
All reasons equally important	25	0.4
Do not know	267	4.0

Source: GAO analysis of telephone survey results.

Approved COPS FAST Applicants Cited Property Crimes as Their Top Public Safety Issue

We reviewed a random sample of 207 COPS FAST approved applications and found that approximately 84 percent (plus or minus 5 percent) of these jurisdictions—serving populations of less than 50,000—cited property crimes most frequently among their top five ranked public safety issues (from the categories listed on the application form), with almost half of the jurisdictions ranking it as their first or second most important concern.[11] In addition, we estimated that at least half the jurisdictions ranked the following public safety issues among their top five: domestic violence, alcohol-related crimes, drug crimes, vandalism, and violent crimes against persons. Table 6 shows the rank order of the public safety issues.

[11]Because we reviewed a sample of all applications, all results are subject to sampling errors. The 84-percent estimate is surrounded by a 95-percent confidence interval of plus or minus 11 percent.

Table 6: Public Safety Issues as Ranked by Jurisdictions Awarded COPS FAST Grants

	Jurisdictions that ranked issue in top five	
Public safety issue	**Number**	**Percent**
Property crimes	174	84.1%
Domestic violence	162	78.3
Alcohol-related crimes (including driving while intoxicated)	131	63.3
Drug crimes	126	60.9
Vandalism	106	51.2
Violent crimes against persons	105	50.7
Traffic violations	76	36.7
Disorderly conduct	41	19.8
Gangs	40	19.3
Weapons	33	15.9
Motor vehicle thefts	25	12.1
Other	7	3.4
Prostitution	2	1.0
Wildlife crimes	2	1.0
Hate crimes	1	0.5
Agricultural crimes	1	0.5

Note: 95-percent confidence interval for the estimates in this table are all less than plus or minus 7 percent.

Source: GAO analysis of COPS Office data.

Agency Comments

On September 13, 1995, we received written comments from the Director of DOJ's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services on a draft of this report. He said that the popularity of the COPS grant programs continues to expand and provided technical clarifications, which we incorporated where appropriate. He also provided some updated information on the progress of the programs since our audit work was completed. The Director's written comments are reproduced in full in appendix II.

We are sending copies of this report to other interested congressional committees and Members and to the Attorney General. Copies will also be made available to others upon request.

The major contributors to this report are listed in appendix III. Please call me on (202) 512-8777 if you have any questions concerning this report.



Norman J. Rabkin
Director, Administration of
Justice Issues

Contents

Letter 1

Appendix I Objectives, Scope, and Methodology 18

Appendix II Comments From the Department of Justice 20

Appendix III Major Contributors to This Report 22

Tables

Table 1: Authorized Hiring Levels for COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD Jurisdictions 6

Table 2: Information Relating to the COPS Grants Application and Selection Processes 7

Table 3: Application Rates for COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD Grants 9

Table 4: Disposition of Applications for COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD Grants 10

Table 5: Reasons Rated as Most Important in Jurisdictions' Decision Not to Apply for a COPS Grant 13

Table 6: Public Safety Issues as Ranked by Jurisdictions Awarded COPS FAST Grants 14

Abbreviations

AHEAD	Accelerated Hiring, Education, and Deployment
BJA	Bureau of Justice Assistance
COPS	Community Oriented Policing Services
DOJ	Department of Justice
FAST	Funding Accelerated for Smaller Towns
MORE	Making Officer Redeployment Effective
OJP	Office of Justice Programs
PHSP	Police Hiring Supplemental Program
UCR	Uniform Crime Report

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

As agreed with the Committee and Subcommittee, our objectives were to review various aspects of the COPS programs and describe the grant application, selection, and monitoring processes for COPS: Phase I, COPS FAST, and COPS AHEAD. In addition, for COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD we were to

- compare the crime rates for applicant and nonapplicant jurisdictions,
- determine why some jurisdictions chose not to apply for the grants, and
- determine the public safety issues of applicant jurisdictions.

To describe the application, selection, and monitoring processes for the COPS programs, we interviewed officials from BJA and the COPS Office, including the Assistant Director for Grants Administration and the co-chiefs of the Grant Monitoring sections. In addition, we reviewed documents used in the grants process, including application forms, selection review forms, and draft monitoring guidelines.

To determine and compare crime rates for COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD applicant and nonapplicant jurisdictions, we used application data provided by the COPS Office[12] and UCR data for 1993, which lists all law enforcement jurisdictions that report crimes to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.[13] UCR data contained information on population and numbers of reported crimes for jurisdictions. We merged the COPS Office's listing of applicant jurisdictions with UCR data to identify nonapplicant jurisdictions. Next, we used UCR data to assign jurisdictions to population categories (less than 50,000 and 50,000 and over) and calculated the number of crimes reported per 1,000 population served. We grouped jurisdictions into COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD grant applicants and nonapplicants, and applicants into those approved and those not approved.

To determine why jurisdictions chose not to apply for COPS grants, we surveyed a stratified, random sample of nonapplicants by telephone. We limited our survey population to city, local, county, and tribal police. These types of law enforcement agencies account for 91 percent of all jurisdictions. Using UCR population data, we stratified the population into three size groups and selected random samples from each: 0 - <10,000 population (71 from 6,094 jurisdictions); 10,000 - <50,000 (143 from 1,375 jurisdictions); and 50,000 and over (all 170 jurisdictions). We completed

[12]We obtained data on all applications that had been received as of April 18, 1995. We conducted limited reliability checks of the COPS program applicant computer files.

[13]The most recent year for which UCR data were available was 1993. We performed no reliability checks of the UCR data.

334, or 87 percent, of our planned contacts with the sample of 384 jurisdictions. Fifty contacts were not completed for various reasons, including difficulty in reaching the appropriate respondent and unwillingness of some jurisdictions to respond. Of the 334 contacts made, we completed interviews with respondents in 289 jurisdictions. We found that 45 did not belong in our study population because they had applied for a COPS grant. Mostly, these jurisdictions were either covered under another jurisdiction's application (and the application was identified by the other jurisdiction) or not listed on the COPS program's applicant file as an individual applicant. All survey results have been weighted to represent the total population.

To determine the public safety issues of applicant jurisdictions, we reviewed a random sample of 207 of the 3,258 COPS FAST applications that had been received and graded or approved for funding as of April 25, 1995. According to the Assistant Director for Grants Administration, this represents about half of the 6,656 jurisdictions that were given preliminary funding approval. Applications were stored at various locations in the COPS Office. To obtain our sample, we used a random starting point and then took every 16th application from the files. Jurisdictions applying for the COPS FAST program were required to rank order their public safety issues from a list of 16 issues. We did not review COPS AHEAD applications because their statements of public safety needs were included as part of a narrative description of their community policing program, which could be up to 18 pages. It would have been difficult, if not impossible, to identify or infer the relative importance of the public safety concerns from such narrative sources.

Our work was done primarily in Washington, D.C., from April to August 1995 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services provided written comments on a draft of this report. The written comments are reproduced in appendix II.

Comments From the Department of Justice

U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

Office of the Director
1100 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

September 13, 1995

Mr. Norman J. Rabkin
Director, Administration of Justice Issues
General Government Division
United States General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Re: **Community Policing: Information on the "COPS on the Beat" Grant Programs (assignment code 182011)**

Dear Mr. Rabkin:

We appreciate the opportunity to submit comments on the draft General Accounting Office report on the "COPS on the Beat" program. I write this letter to to update the progress of this Office in implementing the COPS program since the information gathered by your staff this spring.

Beyond the expedited Phase I, COPS FAST and COPS AHEAD programs reviewed by your staff, the COPS Office also has announced grants under the COPS MORE program, which funds the redeployment of officers into community policing through the acquisition of equipment and technology, the hiring of civilian support personnel, and the payment of overtime. We received over 2,100 applications for COPS MORE, including hundreds of applications from communities that had not applied under our earlier programs. Through the COPS MORE grants announced thus far, over 9,000 officers will be redeployed to community policing.

We also have introduced the Universal Hiring Program, which will provide funding for the hiring or rehiring of additional sworn officers to current COPS grantees, agencies that have not been funded previously, as well as to communities that wish to start a police agency. The first Universal grants were announced on September 12, and will add 1,050 new officers to our nation's streets. We also have announced new initiatives focusing on domestic violence and youth firearms violence.

All told, the Administration's police hiring efforts have authorized the addition of 25,891 additional officers as of the date of this letter. (The applications received to date have requested over twice this many number of officers – a demand that substantially exceeds our FY 95 funding.) COPS-funded officers now will reach agencies serving over 80% of the population of the United States.

From our vantage point, the popularity of the COPS grant programs continues to expand. As the growing count of unsolicited testimonials confirm, police and sheriffs' agencies find that the COPS Office's flexibility, responsiveness, and nonbureaucratic approaches to meeting their needs lays a strong foundation for a new federal-local public safety partnership. These accomplishments also explain why the COPS program retains the support of every major national law enforcement organization.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments on the draft report, as well as the courtesy shown by your staff throughout the course of your review.

Sincerely yours,

Joe Brann

Joseph E. Brann
Director

Major Contributors to This Report

General Government Division, Washington, D.C.	Weldon McPhail, Assistant Director, Administration of Justice Issues David Alexander, Senior Social Science Analyst James M. Fields, Senior Social Science Analyst Donald E. Jack, Staff Evaluator Joanne M. Parker, Senior Social Science Analyst Dennise R. Stickley, Staff Evaluator Pamela V. Williams, Communications Analyst
Detroit Field Office	Henry Malone, Core Group Manager M. Christine Dobrovich, Evaluator-in-Charge Mary A. Lee, Information Processing Assistant
Office of the General Counsel, Washington, D.C.	Ann H. Finley, Senior Attorney

Ordering Information

The first copy of each GAO report and testimony is free. Additional copies are $2 each. Orders should be sent to the following address, accompanied by a check or money order made out to the Superintendent of Documents, when necessary. Orders for 100 or more copies to be mailed to a single address are discounted 25 percent.

Orders by mail:

U.S. General Accounting Office
P.O. Box 6015
Gaithersburg, MD 20884-6015

or visit:

Room 1100
700 4th St. NW (corner of 4th and G Sts. NW)
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, DC

Orders may also be placed by calling (202) 512-6000 or by using fax number (301) 258-4066, or TDD (301) 413-0006.

Each day, GAO issues a list of newly available reports and testimony. To receive facsimile copies of the daily list or any list from the past 30 days, please call (301) 258-4097 using a touchtone phone. A recorded menu will provide information on how to obtain these lists.

For information on how to access GAO reports on the INTERNET, send an e-mail message with "info" in the body to:

info@www.gao.gov

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Bulk Rate
Postage & Fees Paid
GAO
Permit No. G100

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use $300

Address Correction Requested

