

Target Public Safety Grant Request for Bullet Proof Vests

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GRANT REQUEST

Collin County employs 481 certified peace and detention officers who provide judicial and law enforcement services, including patrol, criminal investigations, detention, warrant and civil process service, and courtroom security throughout the county. These men and women face potentially dangerous situations on a daily basis, and as such, Collin County requires the use of ballistic-resistant soft body armor through a mandatory wear policy. Body armor, also known as a bullet proof vest, is considered critical personal protective equipment necessary for law enforcement and corrections officers, which provides an increased level of protection for a range of criminal and accidental threats that officers face in everyday law enforcement events, not just in the expected, high-risk situations. Wearing body armor allows officers to protect themselves so they can protect others.

The use of weapons of all types, particularly handguns by those with criminal intent, poses a constant threat to officers, whether they are performing a routine traffic stop, responding to a domestic quarrel, or serving arrest warrants. A national study found that body armor more than triples the likelihood that a police officer will survive a shooting to the torso. Additionally, the same properties that provide ballistic protection—resistance to penetration and blunt trauma—when combined with abrasion resistance materials have also saved many officers from serious physical injury or death in vehicular and motorcycle accidents; injury from physical assault with 2 by 4's, baseball bats, and other rigid objects; and other potential hazards such as lightning strikes, ox gores, explosions, falls, cement blocks tossed from buildings, tow truck cable snaps, and horse kicks. Body armor has over 3,000 documented saves, and according to a 2010 study, outfitting all law enforcement officers in the United States with body armor would result in a benefit that is nearly twice the cost. In short, vests save lives.

For the past 10 years, Collin County has received a U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) grant to provide bullet proof vests for those employees who require soft body armor. As such, the county does not annually budget for these expenses. Unfortunately, the bill reauthorizing the program stalled in Congress, and we were notified in July 2014 that we would not be receiving DOJ grant funds this year. The county is unable to absorb the cost of this life-saving equipment this far into the budget cycle for FY 2015.

Collin County is in need of 103 ballistic vests for current county employees whose vests are expired/expiring (96) in the next 12 months or who have currently not been issued body armor (7). In addition to these vests, Collin County anticipates employee turnover throughout the year will increase our need for new body armor purchases. Each vest is custom created exactly to the officer's measurements to facilitate unrestricted movement and optimal protection. Therefore, vests cannot be re-issued to new incoming employees who may be of differing height, weight, or gender from the previous officer.

We are requesting \$4,977 from Plano West Target Store 1764 through the Public Safety Grant program to cover the costs associated with purchase of 9 ballistic vests for current Sheriff's Office, Constable Precinct 3 (Plano), and Constable Precinct 4 (Frisco) employees whose vests expire this year or who have need of, but have not currently been issued, body armor. In addition to this request, we are also requesting \$19,984 through the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation for 31 vests, \$25,991 from the CoServ Charitable Foundation to for 47 vests, and additional grants through other local Target stores within other Constable precincts.