

For Immediate Release
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Park County Sheriff's Office Awarded \$125,000 COPS Grant

The Park County Sheriff Office was awarded \$125,000 by the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) to hire one additional officer under the 2017 COPS Hiring Program (CHP). The federal funds are granted over three years to be matched with \$100,838 of Park County funds.



The COPS office received 1,119 applications requesting 3,094 officer positions with requests totaling more than \$409 million. Awards were made to only 179 applicants in the amount of \$98 million (16% were funded). Of the five MT awards (Park Co, Beaverhead Co, Teton Co, Valley Co and Anaconda/Deer Lodge Co), Park County ranked the highest in scores with 136.13.

"This is the second year in a row we have been awarded a COPS Grant from the US Department of Justice. Seeing just how rare these awards are makes me that much more thankful for the financial support from DOJ. This additional deputy sheriff position is a huge win for Park County." --Sheriff Scott Hamilton

Park County currently employs 16 officers that patrol a particularly large geographical area. Because of the extreme distances and types of terrain necessitating coverage of the vast and rural county, as well as the limited number of officers available to provide public safety services, the PCSO often faces challenges in professional delivery of quality law enforcement to the county and the citizens and visitors it serves.

In December 2015, the PCSO sought external independent review of their total operation by the Community Safety Institute (CSI). Although the CSI review praised the Park County Sheriff's Office in their delivery of service given, "inadequate staffing" identified by report researchers demonstrated the absolute need to increase staffing in order to meet the current demands placed on Sheriff's Office staff. The CSI report recommended hiring a minimum of five additional deputies and a minimum of three additional detention officers in order to immediately handle the current service demands.

Funding from this opportunity will help address an immediate public safety need for one additional deputy, during which time the Commissioners can work on addressing future funding needs. The Park County Commissioners expect and fully understand that general reserve funds will pay for this position once all awarded grant funds are utilized. The addition of one deputy would substantially improve the provision of law enforcement services to outlying areas while maintaining the multiple responsibilities in community partnerships and teamwork with fellow employees and citizens.

Contact:

Kristen Galbraith
Nittany Grantworks
406-222-6111
kristen@nittanygrantworks.com