Keeping Students Safe: Funding School Security with the SVPP Grant

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Welcome and Introductions

Michael Paddock:

Hello everyone, and thanks for joining us for Keeping Students Safe: Funding School Security with the School Violence Prevention Program Grant. I'm Michael Paddock, CEO of Grants Office, and I want to welcome everyone to today's session. We've got a great session for you, but before we get started, I want to very much thank our sponsor, Genetec, for sponsoring today's session and for making it possible for us to bring you this information — not just the information on the Grantscast today, but additionally, as we'll be talking about later, a workbook that has been called by some one of the best workbooks we've ever produced. Hopefully that will be a really terrific guide to orient you a little bit more to the SVPP program and also help you as you're developing your proposal and your project, to make that project that much more competitive.

So thank you all for joining us, and thanks to our sponsor, Genetec, for sponsoring today's session. We've got a lot to cover today. We're going to do an overview of the program and then talk about some meta information on lessons from the 2025 competition. Not to steal Elizabeth's thunder, but there are a lot of very interesting insights that came from reviewing every winning and non-winning grant application from the FY2025 competition. Then we'll get more into some strategies for building a competitive project, avoiding common pitfalls, and some tips. Then we'll hear from Jeanne at Genetec about the Genetec Grants Support Team and how you can access some of these free resources from Genetec, and Jeanne will take you through all that. With the time remaining, we'll cover any questions that come up.

Feel free to send your questions, as the slide you've been looking at says, through the question-and-answer interface. If you have trouble finding that Q&A interface, you can go to the bottom right-hand corner of your screen and click on the three dots to find that panel and open it.

I've alluded to the fact that I'm joined today by two great panelists: Jeanne Smith, Program Manager for Grants and Contracts at Genetec, and Elizabeth Evans, Manager of Research and Consultation here at Grants Office. We haven't really had a chance to hear from Elizabeth in a while. She's been busy

managing our research and consultation, as her title implies, but we're very happy to have her on today to return to some of the conversations and grant program details that she had covered years ago. She is now coming back to give us a little bit of a treat in covering the SVPP program for us. So, with that, I'm actually going to turn it right over to Elizabeth to get us started. Elizabeth?

An Overview of SVPP

Elizabeth Evans:

Great. Thank you so much, Michael. I am so glad to be with everybody here today and returning to my love of K-12 education. To get things started, I want to quickly cover some basic fundamentals about the School Violence Prevention Program, or SVPP, as it's known, to make sure that everybody's operating from the same starting point.

Program Fundamentals and Eligibility

SVPP is the federal grant opportunity for supporting physical school safety enhancements — not as an afterthought, but as a central component of the purpose of the program. That's the big reason why this opportunity gets so much attention every year. Now, when people first hear that, their instinct is to think, "Great, this is a technology grant," and technology absolutely matters. But one thing I do want to emphasize early on, because it becomes important throughout the application process, is that SVPP does not fund technology for its own sake. Reviewers are not looking at applications asking themselves which district requested the coolest equipment. They don't want to see the shopping list. Instead, what they're asking is: What school safety challenge is this applicant trying to solve? What evidence do they have that this challenge exists? And why are their planned efforts the right solution to solve that problem? That shift in mindset changes everything.

I also want to point out something that is often missed when it comes to eligibility. While the program is open to state, local, and tribal governments, the primary safety beneficiary has to be K-12 students. Last year, about one in every 200 applicants to SVPP either came from organizations without a K-12 designation or proposed efforts not focused on K-12 students. One in 200 may not seem like a lot, but just pause and think about what that means for those applicants who put time and energy into preparing an application, only for it to be unfunded — or, in many cases, not even scored — because they completely missed the mark on the purpose of this grant.

The Cost-Match Requirement

The other thing I want to highlight is the cost-match requirement. With a maximum award possible of $500,000 and a 25% local match, that means you need to be prepared to put forward up to $166,700 if you want to go for that maximum federal award. That would bring the total project budget up to

$666,700 overall. That's a lot of money. I mention this match requirement because it's one of the biggest mistakes we see applicants make year after year: waiting until the application opens to ask themselves and their partners, "Wait, where is this match coming from?" Those conversations need to happen early. Sometimes applicants are going to use capital funds. Sometimes it's going to be a technology budget. Sometimes it's the safety allocations, or a blend thereof. But the strongest applicants already know, before they start planning their project, where that match is going to come from, because how much you can afford to put forward in cost match is actually going to dictate how much you can request from the federal government. If you can't put forward $160,000, you're not going to be requesting the maximum of $500,000.

The Four Pillars: Planning, Intelligence, Collaboration, and Response

All right, let's talk about what SVPP is actually trying to accomplish through making awards. There are four primary pillars: planning, intelligence, collaboration, and response. As a fun exercise as I go through these, you can even score yourself from one to five in each area, where five is the highest in terms of capability and one is the lowest. If you want, you can drop those scores into the chat. The goal here is to get you to start to identify where gaps might exist, and to start thinking about that early.

First we have planning, and that's pretty straightforward. Do you know your current environment? Have you completed a recent safety assessment, updated emergency procedures, identified your vulnerabilities? Planning is really about understanding where you are before deciding where to invest.

Intelligence is broader than people expect. This isn't about surveillance for surveillance's sake; it's about improving your awareness, recognizing concerning behaviors early, identifying patterns, and helping staff make faster decisions. Technology that supports things like analytics and centralized visibility for that intelligence is great, but it all starts with process.

Then we have collaboration, and that is where a lot of applicants tend to gain ground, find success, and stand out from the crowd, because information often exists, but it's in a lot of disparate places. IT knows one thing, facilities knows another, school leadership sees something, but law enforcement sees something different. So the question really becomes: How do these groups work together before an incident to help prevent incidents?

Lastly, we have the response category, and this one's also pretty easy to explain, like planning. It's going to be how quickly the right people can know the right thing and how to act — not minutes later, not after multiple handoffs, but immediately, or as close to immediately as possible. The thing we are consistently noticing in competitive applications is that they usually don't live in just one category; they're touching all four of these pillars.

Partnerships and Collaboration

The final thing I want to go a little bit deeper on, before jumping into what we can learn from the fiscal year 2025 funding cycle, has to do with that aspect of collaboration I just touched on. Partnerships absolutely make or break an SVPP application. One of the biggest traps applicants fall into is building the entire project internally and then reaching out — to the district, if they're law enforcement, or to law enforcement, if they're the district — and saying, "Hey, can you sign the support letter for us so we can apply to a grant?" That is not real collaboration, and reviewers can tell. In fact, part of the application actually asks who you collaborated with when developing your project plan.

So you want to bring your partners in early — not just law enforcement if you are a school district, or vice versa, but also internally, thinking about your collaborators: finance, facilities, IT, leadership, operations, mental health teams. Every one of these groups is going to see safety differently, and you want all of those perspectives wrapped into your application and your project plan. I'll come back to what strong collaboration actually looks like at the application layer when we're talking about pitfalls. But for now, the big takeaway is: bring your partners in early, document what you decide together, and don't treat your letters of support as an afterthought.

Lessons from the FY25 Competition

A FOIA Request to the COPS Office

If you'll indulge me, as Michael hinted at earlier, I want to share some results of a little pet project that we embarked on after last year's awardees were announced. We wanted to take a look not just at how funding was trending year over year with SVPP, but really dive into what made for the best and worst applications to this grant, particularly by looking at last year's funding cycle. So we submitted a Freedom of Information Act request, or FOIA, to the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services — the COPS Office — to get some data — specifically the names, requested award amounts, application scores, and abstracts for all submitted applications. We were expecting to receive only the information from those funded projects, because that's typically what you get under a FOIA. Instead, we ended up getting the unfunded data as well, much to our surprise. And our gain is your gain, because we want to share what we learned from crunching the numbers.

Score Alone Does Not Determine Funding

First and foremost, the big thing that was most interesting to us was how reviewer score alone didn't determine funding status. While a strong score is absolutely necessary, it was not sufficient for determining award status. It's not as if the COPS Office said, "Everyone over 75 points gets the grant." Instead, what we saw was that 20 unfunded applications actually scored above the lowest funded

applicant. Let that sink in for just a second: 20 applications were unfunded even though they scored higher than the lowest-scoring funded application. So scoring alone doesn't get you the award. What that tells us is that COPS is balancing scoring with other priorities — things like geographic spread, funding category balance, a mix of projects that round out a national cohort. So if you're benchmarking your draft, the floor here is what matters more than the average. No application that was funded last year scored below 66 points. That's the practical "you need to score at least this much" number. But above that, a higher score doesn't necessarily guarantee funding. For context, the average score among funded projects was around 73 points.

Funding Rate by Lead Organization Type

We also learned that the funding rate varied sharply by the type of organization submitting the proposal — more commonly known as the lead applicant. K-12 districts submitted 82% of all applications received last year, and that makes sense, given that K-12 districts would dominate in terms of volume of submissions, because this is a grant focused on K-12 safety, after all. But one type of lead organization that submitted at a lower rate did show a much higher incidence of being selected for awards, and that was tribes. Projects that featured a tribal organization as the lead applicant, or a tribally affiliated K-12 student group as a significant beneficiary, were actually funded over two times as often as districts, and more than three times as often as any other of the eligible lead applicant groups. So if you have the ability to partner with tribes, or to bring mental health into your project in some way, it's a great idea to do so, because it does help you stand out.

Rural Applicants Came Out on Top

The next graph covers something that the COPS Office has publicly shared: in fiscal year 2025, projects that proposed support for rural safety fared significantly better than those that proposed assistance elsewhere. The COPS Office was not trying to hide this fact — they said it themselves — but we wanted to go a little bit deeper and figure out what that really means. What we found is that it's not just that rural applicants win more often; they also apply more often, which I think has something to do with the fact that the COPS Office said they wanted to support rural districts even ahead of the application cycle. What we see is that rural districts made up 38% of the fiscal year 2025 application pool and won at 21%. In contrast, suburban districts were 31% of the pool but won just 7% of the time.

This rural win rate is reflected especially when we look at how certain groups based on the National Center for Education Statistics, or NCES, locale — like rural-remote — were funded at almost five times the rate of other groups, like suburban mid-sized districts. What's especially interesting is that even though large suburbs made up 20% of all applications received last year — the largest individual submission group — only 5% of those submitted actually got accepted for funding. So rural folks really came out on top last year when it comes to SVPP.

Funded Applicants Ask for More, Not Less

Another interesting discovery was that funded applicants actually tend to ask for more federal support, not less. This goes against the conventional wisdom that a proposal may seem more appealing to a reviewer if it skews toward the minimum award amount rather than the maximum. We really see this highlighted by the medians on the right side of the screen. Funded applicants asked for roughly $408,000 at the median, while unfunded applicants asked for about $64,000 less, and the mean tells the same story: we're seeing $370,000 for funded and only $309,000 for unfunded. So these stronger proposals, the ones getting funded, tend to be more ambitious in their budgets, closer to that $500K cap. For me, this is less a message about maximizing your award request by filling your budget with wish-list items, and more a byproduct of what COPS is looking for: a project ambitious enough to comprehensively address school safety in a meaningful way is going to cost real money. Asks that come in well under the cap signal to reviewers that the scope is too narrow, or that the applicant hasn't thought through what a comprehensive implementation plan really requires.

The chart on the left side backs this idea up. The largest single bucket of awards went to applicants who asked for the full $500K maximum, while the largest bucket of declines was in the $50K to $100K range.

A Profile of the Ideal FY25 Applicant

So what did the ideal applicant look like in fiscal year 2025, and what does that mean for you as you're getting ready to prepare for the fiscal year 2026 funding cycle? This slide highlights five traits that defined the average awardee last year. Before anyone takes this as a checklist, I do want to draw one important distinction. Four of these attributes reflect structural patterns in how SVPP is scored and what reviewers tend to reward, and they are likely to carry over from cycle to cycle each year, because they reflect program design, not a particular cohort of applicants. But the fifth characteristic — the top recipient states — is more of an interesting takeaway than a planning point. Which states cluster at the top of an awardee list is going to shift year after year, based on who applies and how well they address the other four aspects. So know that just because an applicant from one of these five states did well last year, it doesn't mean they are any more advantaged to win this year.

I'd also like to confirm that plenty of applicants who don't look like this profile also win, and plenty who do, lose. The reason I share these trends is that the four structural attributes you see — final score, organization type, locale, and request — give you a baseline, a sense of where the funded group sits. So when you're drafting your own application and building your project, you have an honest read on where you stack up by comparison. If you're a large suburban district asking for only $150,000, the data says you probably have a pretty steep hill to climb. But if you're a rural district building out a multi-category safety plan with a $475,000 ask, the data says you're already in the neighborhood of what tends to win. That's really the value in knowing this profile.

Building a Competitive Project

Four Components and Six Expense Categories

With that in mind, let's talk about building a competitive project and what that looks like. By competitive, what I'm really talking about here is building out a comprehensive school safety strategy, because that is the thing the COPS Office is looking for in applicants. So what makes for a comprehensive school safety project? The COPS Office offers four main components — planning, intelligence, collaboration, and response — and we talked about these earlier. Planning involves improving school safety and sustainability through formal assessments, emergency preparedness activities, and long-term operational planning. Intelligence focuses on identifying potential threats and improving situational awareness before incidents escalate. Collaboration emphasizes communication and coordination between schools, law enforcement, emergency responders, mental health professionals, and community stakeholders. And response prioritizes reducing emergency notification time and improving first-responder effectiveness during critical incidents.

But the six categories on the slide here describe something slightly different: not what the reviewers are looking for, per se, but rather what funded applicants actually budget for and write into their proposals as they strive to achieve those four aspects of a comprehensive school safety strategy. There's a reason this mapping isn't one-to-one. A single line item in a budget often serves more than one purpose out of those four components. Cameras can support both intelligence and response. Communications equipment can touch all four. Mental health supports, depending on the form they take, live across planning and intelligence, for instance. So as I talk about these six expense categories, know that they're intended as a practical translation of how applicants actually spend the money.

What Funded Applicants Budget For

With that in mind, let's look at how these six categories played out in fiscal year 2025's funded and unfunded projects. Detection and monitoring wins big as the most commonly requested, and this is owed in large part to cameras being by far the most popular line-item request for SVPP. But what's most interesting is that the gap between funded and unfunded projects requesting detection and monitoring expenses really isn't that wide; they're pretty close. The biggest funded-versus-unfunded gap is actually linked to the people and planning budget category: 61% in funded versus 33% in unfunded. This is significant because people and planning is the only non-equipment category, and it's also the category most aligned with three of the four scoring priorities for SVPP. The fact that funded applicants mentioned it almost twice as often as unfunded ones tells us that reviewers are rewarding those who treat technology as part of a broader plan, not the entire plan itself.

You might be asking, shouldn't we care more about technology? After all, this is an event sponsored by Genetec, a safety solutions provider. Of course we should. The reason people and planning matters isn't that technology doesn't. It's that reviewers want to see your technology requests grounded in planning and human services context. If your application only highlights equipment, no matter how strong and great that equipment is, reviewers will still see a partially answered question when they're looking for all four parts. So if you take only one thing away from today's session, I hope it's this: SVPP can absolutely help you fund your Genetec solutions, but if you really want to have the best shot at success when applying, ask yourself, "What workflow are we improving because of Genetec?" That answer matters more to a reviewer than the equipment list itself.

People and Planning: The Key Differentiator

Okay, I promise this is my last graph for a while, but it is perhaps one of the most important, one of my favorites, and it really highlights the entire point that I'm trying to make here. Truly competitive projects are those that propose a comprehensive safety strategy. Competitive applications demonstrate how multiple technologies work together in a layered, multifaceted way — such as panic buttons activating notifications and camera feeds simultaneously. They use layered, integrated security solutions that connect multiple technologies into a unified response system. The funded applicants don't just rely on one single technology solution; they're thinking broadly. Moreover, all of these technology solutions get grounded in some human-centered effort. They're doing things like partnering with law enforcement or mental health providers, conducting safety audits, and engaging in emergency operations planning. Winning projects haven't forgotten about the comprehensive aspect of the comprehensive school safety strategy requirement, and that's why we see applicants that note four or more of these expense categories in their abstract being funded at four times the rate of others.

So, long story short, people and planning efforts are the real differentiator. These expenses appear in 61% of funded applicants versus only 33% of unfunded applicants. Even though SVPP is considered more of an equipment- and technology-focused grant compared with its sister program, the STOP School Violence Program, or SSV, it's SVPP's expense categories that look the most "soft" which do the heaviest lifting in determining whether a project ends up being funded or not.

Avoiding Common Application Pitfalls

Let's talk about some common pitfalls you might run into when actually drafting your applications, so you know how to avoid them. I've got five mistakes we'd like to help you avoid, and at the end of the day, all five really boil down to an issue of clarity. Most applications that struggle don't fail because they're bad ideas; they fail because reviewers can't confidently connect the dots. Strong applications do a few things consistently: they define their problems clearly, they support their assertions, they explain

their rationale, they show readiness for the project, and they avoid assumptions. So as we go through the next several slides, I'd encourage everyone to evaluate their own project and ask themselves: if Elizabeth knows nothing about our district, would our application still make sense to her? That's the lens through which you need to be thinking, because reviewers aren't local and they don't know you. They only know what you tell them on the page, so your proposal needs to guide them.

Clearly Defined Safety Need

First up, we have a need statement that is too broad in scope. A weak statement is something like, "Our schools want to be safer and improve security for students and staff." Nobody disagrees with that statement, but reviewers can't score it. Strong applications move from general concerns to measurable conditions. Instead of saying communication needs improvement, can you explain how many delayed notifications occurred, how often drills exposed gaps, and what audit findings support that concern? Specificity creates credibility. Also think about the data sources, such as threat assessments, discipline trends, access incidents, visitor logs, survey data, emerging findings, police reports, safety committee recommendations, et cetera. With added detail, your need statement turns into something like: "Over the past three years, the district has documented 27 unauthorized door access incidents and multiple delayed lockdown notifications, demonstrating a critical need for upgraded access control and emergency communication systems."

That is a much stronger safety need. As an exercise, I recommend that for every item in your budget, you ask, "What evidence supports this?" If you can't answer that quickly, build in more justification. One sentence we use here at Grants Office a lot is "evidence earns permission." The stronger your evidence, the easier it becomes for reviewers to support your solution.

Strong Alignment with Allowable Activities

Next, let's talk about making sure requested budget line items actually fit the program's purpose. This sounds obvious, but every year reviewers see applications where requested items feel disconnected from the stated problem. Sometimes the issue isn't that the technology is bad, but rather that the coordination is weak. For SVPP specifically, reviewers want to see a direct connection to prevention, deterrence, communication, coordination, and response, whether that's access control, surveillance, visitor management, notification systems, emergency communications, et cetera. So when you describe purchases, avoid generic descriptions. Don't say, "We are purchasing security upgrades." Instead, explain what changes operationally. Rather than saying "installing access control," say something like, "implementing badge-based access control, panic buttons, and integrated video surveillance systems to reduce unauthorized entry events and improve lockdown execution at all three elementary school entrances."

That tells reviewers what, where, and why. Same thing with cameras. Don't stop at "adding surveillance." Instead, explain: reducing blind spots, improving event verification, supporting emergency response, providing situational awareness. Those kinds of outcomes matter. Another thing I always recommend is, again, a line-item test. Ask of every budget item: Could someone unfamiliar with our district understand exactly why this purchase is necessary? If not, you can strengthen that narrative, because reviewers should never have to infer value. You want to connect those dots for them, because the easiest applications to fund are those that are the easiest to understand.

A Comprehensive, Evidence-Based Strategy

In case you aren't sick of me talking about comprehensive school safety strategies yet, good news: here it is again. We have already talked about how unsuccessful applications usually feature some version of "our proposal is focused primarily on equipment" — for example, "We are purchasing cameras to help keep the schools safe." That's not because the equipment isn't important; it's because the equipment doesn't operate itself. Reviewers want to know how equipment becomes part of daily operations. What changes after implementation? Who owns the process, and how do people use it? That's where layered strategy comes in. A strong application usually talks about three things together: people, process, and technology. For people, mention who participates, who receives training, who responds. For process, discuss what procedures change and how communication works.

And then for technology, mention what tools support those procedures. Think about security vestibules, for example. By themselves, they're infrastructure, but combined with visitor procedures, camera verification, staff training, and notification workflows, now you have a strategy. Same with surveillance: cameras alone don't create safety. People making informed decisions create safety, and safety technologies can support those decisions. So a much stronger statement might look something like: "The proposed project combines secure vestibules, visitor management, surveillance integrations, staff training, and coordinated emergency response protocols to create a layered security approach aligned with national best practices." Ask yourself, again: if this one line-item technology solution disappeared tomorrow, would the rest of the project still make some kind of sense? If the answer is no, then the strategy probably needs strengthening, because comprehensive projects are resilient enough to remain coherent even when one of the technology solutions is taken out.

Meaningful Law Enforcement and Stakeholder Collaboration

Another common pitfall centers around weak partnerships, and what I mean here is talking about the idea of collaboration instead of actually demonstrating that you have it. Weak collaboration sounds like, "Law enforcement is supportive of the project and may assist if needed." Strong collaboration sounds like, "Law enforcement helped identify communication gaps and participated in planning and response workflows." Do you notice the difference? One emphasizes approval, while the other emphasizes

participation. Meaningful collaboration goes well beyond the police and district partnership. You're thinking broadly by also having emergency management, mental health teams, facilities, IT, campus administrators, operations, and transportation involved — even communications staff — because incidents rarely stay within one department. One of my favorite questions to ask applicants is: Who would immediately become involved if something serious happened tomorrow?

That list is what actually becomes your stakeholder group for SVPP. Another thing that strengthens applications is being specific about task ownership. Who leads implementation? Who receives alerts? Who maintains systems? Who trains staff? Who participates in exercises? Reviewers like operational clarity, and any support letters included in your application should provide that clarity. The strongest letters don't say, "We support this proposal." Instead, they say, "This project was developed jointly with the county sheriff's office, local police departments, school administrators, and mental health partners, all of whom participated in the district safety assessment and response planning process." That language feels very different, and it signals real buy-in and sustainability of those collaborative efforts.

Realistic Budget and Sustainability Plan

Finally, we have two application components that are often left to the end of planning, when your mental energy is already exhausted and time is running short: budgets and sustainability plans. The best advice I can offer is to think of these components early, as you're planning other aspects of the project. That way you've still got the space to think through nitpicky details like inconsistencies between what is budgeted for and what is described in the narrative. The same holds true for thinking about your plans to pick up the baton and run with things after the grant ends. Reviewers don't want to see you kicking that can down the road by saying something like, "Our district's education foundation is applying to local foundations for the required match and maintenance costs in anticipation of receiving this award." Saying that you'll determine sustainability later is akin to saying you haven't thought about it, which is an immediate red flag. You want to inspire confidence.

So instead, you want to say something like: "The district's Board of Education has approved a commitment of reserve funds for not only the required 25% match but an additional five-year maintenance agreement within the capital technology budget to sustain system functionality after the grant period." That kind of language communicates readiness, and readiness creates confidence. At the end of the day, reviewers are not funding the purchases; they're funding execution. Your budget should prove you're prepared to execute, while your sustainability plan shows that you will continue to execute.

Tips to Improve Your Chances of Success

The Abstract as a Diagnostic Mirror

Now that we've covered a lot of ground already, and we're going to be wrapping up soon, I want to leave you with a few final thoughts around how you're planning to articulate your project vision, because if you've taken these tips to heart, it will be perfectly represented in your application's project abstract. Your abstract is a really useful diagnostic mirror because it's actually, in most cases, the last thing you write — which is to say it's put together after you've had a chance to fully think through your justifications for the request and your plan to carry out the project. So it's a great indicator of what anyone can expect to see as the general tenor of your narrative.

To prove this point, I have one final graph for you all — sorry, I know there have been a lot of graphs. Taken en masse, we see three consistent content patterns that are shared among the 1,314 unfunded project abstracts from last year. But even more interestingly, there are five content patterns that are present in the 211 funded project abstracts from last year, which are also largely absent from the unfunded abstracts. So I want to let you know these three things you might want to consider leaving out or minimizing, as well as five things you want to be sure to do.

What Unfunded Abstracts Do

Let's start with what to avoid. First, we have the use of heavy marketing or sales adjectives — words that sound impressive but don't carry a lot of information. About 36% of unfunded abstracts use at least one of these adjectives, versus only 19% of funded ones. So you really want to take a hard look at your writing and make sure you're not using adjectives to decorate your request rather than connecting back to an actual documented need. This point really leads into the next issue: the equipment shopping list. In short, unfunded applicants describe what they want to buy without explaining why they need it, and the data backs that up. The word "purchase," as an example, shows up nearly 20% of the time in unfunded abstracts, while it's in only 10% of the funded abstracts. Finally, we have passive capability claims.

This is something I see time and time again when reviewing applications — not just with SVPP, but really in any grant. The promise of being able to do something shows up roughly three times more in unfunded project abstracts than in funded ones. The issue with this is that oftentimes these claims are paired with the equipment shopping list, so what we have, grammatically speaking, is the subject of the project becoming the equipment and what it can do, rather than the subject being student or district safety — which really flies in the face of the purpose of the grant program.

What Funded Abstracts Do

So what about the funded abstracts? What are they doing? Honestly, the strongest pattern is that funded abstracts read like they were written by somebody who actually studied the scoring rubric. They systematically name the federal high-need categories that COPS gives scoring preference to, and they back those claims up with numbers. For example, funded abstracts were more likely to invoke the federal designations that were driving bonus points in last year's competition, such as persistent poverty communities as defined by the National Institute of Justice, or NIJ, historically disadvantaged communities, and opportunity zones. In fact, one in eight funded abstracts explicitly named one of those designations, while only one in a hundred of the unfunded abstracts did so. That's a 17-fold gap. That's huge.

The next three boxes are all about evidence: documenting the case for funding support with specifics rather than objectives. These aspects really do build on each other. Funded abstracts quantify socioeconomic need with hard numbers; percentages and dollar figures appear about twice as often as in unfunded abstracts. They provide context by naming specific incidents and the dates those incidents occurred, and they detail partner agencies and sustainability plans rather than just gesturing vaguely in that direction. For example, sustainability language appears in roughly a third of all funded abstracts versus less than a fifth of the unfunded ones, and "wraparound services" specifically shows up over five times more often in a funded project abstract than in an unfunded one. This all leads to the last thing that funded abstracts do: they quantify the project. This really closes the loop by extending the quantification habit project-wide. Funded applicants count their own deliverables — exact door counts, camera counts, beneficiary counts. About 89% of funded abstracts contain a two-digit or larger number, versus only 72% of unfunded abstracts.

These five patterns separate funded abstracts from unfunded ones, and they all point in the same direction. Every one of these patterns is about replacing vague claims with verifiable evidence — or, put another way, back to a word I used earlier: clarity. They provide clarity. So, like I said earlier, it all comes down to clarity. You can avoid those three unfunded project traits by adding that clarity in the five areas I noted.

The SVPP Application Planning Workbook

To help you do that, I want to close by offering you two final tips. The first is to leverage this SVPP application planning resource guide that we've made. This workbook will walk you through the basic sections of the SVPP application and give you space to start gathering your thoughts in anticipation of the fiscal year 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity, or NOFO, release. It also provides links to additional resources and some of our favorite best-practice grant pro tips. And in case you're not sick of seeing graphs from today's event, we even go into more detail about the findings from our fiscal year 2025

funded and unfunded project analysis. My favorite part of this workbook is actually the comparison of two project abstracts, one funded and one not, showing what works and what doesn't. I definitely want to encourage you to head to the landing page for this event later today or tomorrow — and you can scan the QR code now to keep it handy — because that workbook is a great resource to help you start to gather data, pull those numbers, and get that clarity early on.

Getting Ready to Apply

Lastly, know that it's never too soon to get started and get ready to apply to SVPP. Even though the grant isn't open yet, we do expect it to open any day now, and there are several things you can do to get a jump on the to-do list, which will help you submit on time. First and foremost, get your SAM.gov and Grants.gov accounts in order. If you've got those already, awesome — then you can start working on your budget and your data collection. Historically, applicants get about 45 days between the NOFO release and when the deadline falls for SVPP. But this year, things have been a little bit funky with grant application timelines, given everything going on under the current presidential administration. Some grants are only giving applicants two weeks to apply.

So while we can't say for certain what the COPS Office is going to do just yet, unfortunately, just know that the more you can do now, the less you'll have to juggle later, regardless of how long that application window is. With that, I'd now like to pass things over to Jeanne to talk about how we are here to help you in your pursuit of SVPP or other grants through Genetec. Take it away, Jeanne. Oh, Jeanne, you might be muted still.

More About the Genetec Grants Support Team

Jeanne Smith:

Thank you, Elizabeth. Good afternoon, everyone. Sorry about that. Thank you for attending today's webinar, and thank you, Elizabeth, for all that great information. We've worked together a long time, but this is the first time in a while that we've gotten to do a webinar together, and as always, I've learned something new from you. As Michael said at the beginning of this presentation, and as Elizabeth just said, my name is Jeanne Smith, and I have the privilege of being the program manager for the Genetec grants office. I'm going to take just a few minutes to tell you about our grants program.

The Genetec Grants Support Team is now in our fourth year. In our fourth year, I'm very happy to say, we've had at this point more than $22 million in grant awards thus far, and we've done that working with Grants Office by providing information about grants and customized research identifying available grant funding for those who need it. We've also consulted with them on project ideas and provided grant application assistance. Whatever the level of grants assistance required for customers seeking to

fund Genetec solutions, these services are provided at no cost to the customer. All the services are underwritten by Genetec.

Who Is Eligible for Grant Funding

Grants are available for publicly funded agencies and nonprofit organizations across the United States. The list that you see on your screen is non-exhaustive by any means. As you can see — education, law enforcement, emergency responders, healthcare, transportation — any agency you can think of that's not-for-profit, there's funding out there. The only public sector agencies that do not receive federal grant funding are the federal government. Well, actually, they do receive federal funding — it's their budget — but they are not available for grant funding. Anyone else in the public sector, you're eligible for grant funding. That doesn't mean, however, that you're eligible for all grants. Grants can be viewed as different pots of money that are allocated for different purposes. Eligibility can be determined by agency, geographic location, intended outcome, or a combination of these factors. Regardless of the grant opportunity you qualify for, however, if you are seeking funding for a technology-rich project that includes a substantive Genetec component, the Genetec Grants Support Team is here to help you. As I said earlier, this assistance is available at no cost to you.

Services

So what is this assistance? Working with Grants Office, our team provides funder prospecting, which is a fancy way of saying a grants development consultant will identify the best-fit grants for you and your project using the Grants Office database of tens of thousands of available grants. From this research, you'll receive a customized report that you can use as a tool in your grantseeking and selection. Our team also provides grant readiness coaching, consultation on your specific project, and assistance with developing and strengthening your grant proposals.

The Step-by-Step Process

If this sounds like a lot, well, you don't have to worry, because we have developed a very simple step-by-step process. The first step is to complete and submit the Information Collection Tool, or ICT, which is available by scanning the QR code on your screen, or you may request a link to the form via email from grantsoffice@genetec.com. The tool itself is short and simple, and it takes less than 10 minutes to complete. We ask for contact information and a little bit about your technology needs and the problems that you're trying to solve. When you're filling out the form, just keep in mind that grants tend to focus on societal benefits rather than specific technology. So jot down the outcomes that you hope to achieve. No matter what your intended outcome is — whether it's a reduction in school or community violence, improved law enforcement response time to an incident, or an increase in situational awareness — you'll need to be able to show how the technology you're seeking will further that outcome. As

Elizabeth noted, technology solutions such as cameras or access control are not what funders are looking to fund, no matter how cool that technology is.

What funders fund is what that technology will do for you. Genetec technology is cutting edge — it's really cool stuff — but what that technology can do for you is what funders are looking for you to talk about. Show funders what outcomes you're trying to achieve. That's what they want to know about. So when you're filling out your ICT, fill it out as completely as possible, and then click the submit button. We'll review it and send it to Grants Office, and they'll get started on your report.

Your ICT will be assigned to a grants development consultant who is an expert in your particular area or industry. The consultant will take the information from the ICT and develop a customized report of best-fit funding opportunities. It is based not just on who you are and what you do, but on your project outcomes, the technology you want to purchase to reach those outcomes, and also the size of your project and your location. Once the report's ready, we'll send it to you and schedule a 30-minute call to review the identified grant funding opportunities with you. We'll discuss ways to hone your project to ensure it's a good fit with the identified opportunities, make sure the outcomes align with the grant and funder priorities, and then talk about next steps with you. Customer participation in these calls is key, and we'll need you to work with us closely throughout the grant application process. That's the key to success.

If you have a lot of grants experience, just not enough time to look for the grants themselves, your support could begin and end with the identification of grant funding sources. In other words, you may just need the report, or maybe you go through the first call with us but take it from there, and that's fine. But support can run the gamut. For instance, you can ask for grant coaching and help with grant selection, or assistance with responding to notices of funding opportunities, or perhaps you'll need assistance with review and editing of your grant application. As long as you are committed and actively engaged, we'll supply as much or as little support as you need. As the applicant, you as the customer must submit your own application, but our team is happy to provide any guidance that you might need on the process, up to and including sitting with you on a Teams call as you submit your application, if that's what you need.

And don't think you'd be the first, because I promise you that you won't. We'll track the application with you throughout, up to award, and be with you to answer any questions all along the way. And hopefully we'll be the first to celebrate with you when you're successful. That's it. That's the process. Thanks so much for allowing me to speak with you today. If you have any questions, feel free to put them in the chat. With that, Michael, I'll turn this back over to you.

Q&A Session

Michael Paddock:

Great, thank you. Thanks very much, Jeanne and Elizabeth, for sharing your extensive knowledge and information here. We have a couple of minutes for questions, so we're going to get to as many questions as we can. I'm going to put it on this slide. I want to say, if we don't answer your question, you can always send an email to grantsoffice@genetec.com to leverage the Genetec Grants Support Program that Jeanne was just talking about and get answers to your questions as well. You can also reach us directly at helpdesk@grantsoffice.com. Okay, questions.

Audience Questions

Q1: Can nonprofits that work with schools apply directly?

Michael Paddock:

The first question, which came up a couple of times — this is for Elizabeth, I think — is: Can nonprofits that work with schools apply directly?

Elizabeth Evans:

That's a great question. Unfortunately, no. You cannot apply directly, simply because the eligibility has to be that unit of local government, whether that is a state, tribal, municipal, or county agency, things like that. Schools — both public charters and school districts — fall under that umbrella, as do law enforcement agencies, but nonprofits do not.

Q2: When will the FY2026 submission deadline be announced?

Michael Paddock:

Another question that came in: You mentioned that the submission deadline for 2026 has not been announced yet. Do we have any sense of when that might happen?

Elizabeth Evans:

We are checking daily for that. The COPS Office and much of the Department of Justice, or DOJ, have been trickling out funding opportunities, but SVPP isn't one of them yet. Last year it actually was open by this time — I think the deadline was in June — so they're behind schedule a little bit, but we are expecting to see it, hopefully, at the start of next month.

Q3: Is there a way to find out your score on a past submission?

Michael Paddock:

Great. And we have two more questions. Is there any way to find out what your score was on a past submission? “I applied for several COPS grants that didn’t get funded. What’s the process for doing that?”

Elizabeth Evans:

Absolutely. When you get your denial, you should have that information in the denial letter, and if it’s not there, it’s a quick reply back to say, “Hey, we would like to see the reviewer’s comments and our application’s score.” I also recommend asking what the lowest funded applicant’s score was, so you can see how you stack up by comparison.

Q4: Can SVPP fund network monitoring tools to detect cyberbullying?

Michael Paddock:

Great. Then one final question that came in: Can you use SVPP for network monitoring tools to detect cyberbullying?

Elizabeth Evans:

You know, that would be something I’d want to check in terms of the allowable and unallowable cost list. So that’s a great question to email us about at grantsoffice@genetec.com, and we can follow up regarding that and what was in the allowable cost list last year, because it’s probably going to be the same list again for this year.

Michael Paddock:

Got it. Okay, great. Well, thanks very much, and I appreciate all of that great information. I want to say, too, someone had posted that they couldn’t access the workbook unless they were using Microsoft. I just want to let you know we’re going to drop a link to a Dropbox in just a second.

Q5: Is the free grant support only available if the grant purchases Genetec products?

Michael Paddock:

Oh, we had another question that came in: Is the free grant support only if the grant purchases Genetec products? Jeanne, that one’s for you.

Jeanne Smith:

Well, okay, it’s kind of tricky. The answer is, well, it is for Genetec customers. Yeah, it is — the support is for Genetec customers. Let me put it that way.

Michael Paddock:

Yeah, okay. Yes, it is for customers. Great. Okay, terrific.

Closing

Michael Paddock:

I think that's the last question we had. All right, well, thanks very much. Thanks, Jeanne Smith and Elizabeth Evans, for sharing your knowledge and insights with us. I'm going to post in the chat in the last 30 seconds here a Dropbox link where you can access the workbook. Oh, it looks like Kate already beat me to the punch. Nice job, Kate, our intrepid webcast producer. So you should be able to access it there in the chat. If you can't access it, or if you have trouble accessing it in another way, just send us an email and we'll be happy to send you a copy. All right, thanks, Jeanne and Elizabeth, for again sharing your knowledge and insights with us. This was really a lot of great information — a lot of synthesized information that you won't get anywhere else. A huge thanks to our sponsor, Genetec, for making it possible for us to bring you all this information, and to all of you. I hope you found this a valuable use of your time, and we'll look forward to seeing you again on a future webcast. Have a great day, everybody.

— End of Transcript —

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