

Application: Springfield Police ORT

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Organized Retail Theft Grant Program 23-25

Summary

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Application

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Application

1. These narrative application questions focus on how the applicant addresses the following funding priorities:

- Ability to address organized retail theft that places retail employees, the public, or both, at risk of physical injury.
- Ability to identify and address fencing networks connected to organized retail theft.
- Ability to identify and address the underlying causes of organized retail theft by focusing on individuals or groups who have committed or are at risk of committing organized retail theft.
- Evidence of collaboration with retailers or law enforcement agencies to support the reduction of organized retail theft in the jurisdiction served by the grant.
- Grant-funded operations designed to have a regional or statewide beneficial effect on the reduction of organized retail theft.
- Other criteria that the Commission chooses to include in the Organized Retail Theft Grant Program solicitation.

2. It is strongly recommended that applicants first read through all application questions and closely review the list of required documentation listed in the Grant Solicitation.

1. Describe the jurisdiction your program will serve if awarded funds.

The Springfield Police Department serves the city of Springfield, Oregon, a community with a population of approximately 62,000 residents. Located in Lane County, Springfield is part of the Eugene-Springfield Metropolitan Statistical Area, which has a combined population of around 380,000. Our jurisdiction encompasses a mix of urban and suburban environments, featuring a diverse range of retail establishments from large shopping centers to small local businesses. Our adjacency to Interstate 5 makes our jurisdiction a common target for known interstate ORT groups to be able to quickly victimize and depart.

Additionally, due to the interconnected nature of organized retail crime, our efforts frequently extend to neighboring cities within Lane County and beyond, necessitating a collaborative approach with regional law enforcement agencies and retailers. If awarded funds, our program will address ORC not only within Springfield but also aim to mitigate its impact across the entire county, and even state, through enhanced intelligence sharing and coordinated operations.

2. Describe the organized retail theft-related problem within the defined jurisdiction that your program seeks to address.

Organized retail theft poses a significant threat to Springfield's retail community, resulting in substantial financial losses and increased safety risks for employees and customers. The problem is characterized by sophisticated theft rings that systematically target local retailers, stealing large quantities of merchandise for resale through illicit channels. The problem has been exponentially aggravated by our region's large-scale illegal drug industry and its network of addicts, commonly exploited to carry out these thefts.

The activities of ORT offenders have escalated in recent years, with those involved often moving between neighboring cities, complicating enforcement efforts. The presence of fencing operations that facilitate the sale of stolen goods exacerbates the issue, making it difficult to trace and recover stolen merchandise. Springfield Police Department's Crime Reduction Unit (CRU) has already been working for nearly a year to gain traction against the growing problem and is already working to prosecute several large-scale fencing operations to the fullest.

Our program seeks to address these challenges by continuing to dismantle ORT networks through strong, proactive retail missions, targeting fencing operations, and implementing preventative measures to reduce the prevalence of ORT within our jurisdiction.

3. How does your organization identify or intend to identify the underlying causes of organized retail theft by focusing on individuals or groups who have committed or are at risk of committing organized retail theft?

The Springfield Police Department's Crime Reduction Unit (CRU) employs a multifaceted approach to identify the underlying causes of organized retail theft, with a particular focus on substance abuse and illegal drugs as significant motivating factors. Our analysis of crime data and interviews with apprehended offenders have consistently highlighted a strong correlation between ORT and drug addiction. Many individuals involved in ORT commit thefts to fund their substance abuse habits, making drug addiction a critical driver of these crimes.

In addition, CRU contains SPD's current drug enforcement unit, a TFO within the DEA, to tackle the nexus between ORT and drug use. By focusing on the critical link between substance abuse and organized retail theft, we aim to disrupt the cycle of addiction-driven crime. This approach not only helps in reducing ORT incidents but also contributes to addressing the broader issue of drug-related criminal activity in our jurisdiction.

Lastly, Springfield is very unique in the fact that we have the state's largest municipal jail facility to hold misdemeanor offenders, meaning that the common revolving door complaint about other correctional facilities does not apply. We are able to not only hold offenders accountable while potentially building larger, aggregated ORT cases, but we can follow-up with them in person to discuss willingness to assist in our overall mission to work up the chain of ORT to larger-scale involvements.

4. How does your organization identify or intend to identify and address fencing organizations connected to organized retail theft?

The SPD's Crime Reduction Unit (CRU) utilizes advanced investigative techniques and intelligence gathering to identify and address fencing organizations associated with ORT. This involves monitoring online marketplaces, conducting undercover operations, and analyzing transaction records to trace the flow of stolen goods. Collaborating with regional law enforcement agencies and retail partners, we share intelligence and coordinate efforts to dismantle fencing networks. Often, initial identification is ascertained through simple interrogation, and low-level offenders are willing to provide crucial intelligence for a certain level of leniency.

Once identified, we employ a combination of actions, including search warrants, collaboration with Oregon DOJ for continued surveillance, and eventual arrest and prosecution utilizing the state's statutes for aggregating incidents and finding the most capable venue for prosecution. We also work with established consortiums such as ORCA-OR to strengthen laws against fencing operations. One of our main goals is to disrupt the resale market for stolen goods, thereby reducing the incentive for ORT.

5. Does your organization have existing infrastructure (i.e. personnel, equipment) with a primary focus of addressing organized retail theft?

Yes

6. How will your organization use grant funds to investigate, disrupt, deter or reduce organized retail theft within the program's jurisdiction?

Grant funds will be strategically utilized by the Springfield Police Department to enhance our efforts against organized retail theft. We will allocate funds to increase funding for current personnel, enabling us to conduct 18 targeted operations over 12 months, both large scale blitzes and follow-up on established movement of stolen property, focusing on apprehending offenders and dismantling fencing networks.

A command/surveillance vehicle will be acquired to serve as a central operational hub, equipped with advanced surveillance technology for real-time intelligence during high-risk operations as well as a covert drop/surveillance vehicle to discreetly operate from. Both of these vehicles will have interchangeable surveillance tools to ensure effective ability to deploy under any circumstance. We will also procure a small unmanned aerial system (sUAS) for overwatch and situational security. SPD has an existing interagency sUAS Team with Eugene Police consisting of multiple FAA licensed pilots who will be able to assist in these operations.

To uncover communications related to ORT activities, we will invest in cell phone extraction technology. This will help trace stolen goods and identify key players in ORT networks through their communications. Comprehensive training will be provided to ensure our team can effectively operate these advanced tools.

Additional funds will cover necessary items such as laptop computers purpose-built for mobile dispatch and communication tools including radios with undercover and surveillance-specific accessories. These investments will improve operational efficiency and safety, enabling thorough and effective ORT investigations.

7. How does your organization address or intend to address organized retail theft that places retail employees, the public, or both, at risk of physical injury?

The Springfield Police Department prioritizes the safety of retail employees and the public by implementing proactive measures to mitigate the risks associated with organized retail theft. Our CRU conducts regular patrols and blitz operations in high-risk retail areas to provide a visible deterrent to potential offenders. We work closely with retail employees on how to handle confrontations safely and recognize suspicious behaviors. Additionally, we collaborate with retailers to enhance in-store security measures, such as improved lighting, surveillance systems, and the presence of security personnel and prioritize identifying and apprehending offenders who use threats, intimidation, and reckless behavior while carrying out their criminal behavior. Our department has already conducted in-house training to ensure our officers have been made aware of new statutory definitions under ORS 164.055(g) and aggravations created by reckless conduct during theft incidents. By fostering a safer retail environment, we aim to reduce the likelihood of violent encounters and ensure the well-being of all community members.

8. How does your organization currently track or plan to track your efforts to reduce organized retail theft? What concrete measures (i.e. number of individuals charged, items recovered, value of items recovered) will you use?

The Springfield Police Department employs a comprehensive tracking system to monitor and evaluate our efforts to reduce organized retail theft. We maintain detailed records of all ORT-related incidents, including the number of arrests, charges filed, and convictions. Additionally, we document the quantity and value of stolen items recovered during our operations. Since its inception in mid-2023, CRU operations have resulted in 48 arrests including 27 felony arrests and 21 misdemeanor arrests as well as the recovery of over \$96,000 in stolen property. This includes self-initiated activity and 6 planned retail blitzes carried out by team members with specific knowledge and training in retail theft.

Our CRU also uses data analytics processed by our Strategic Crime Analyst to assess trends and measure the effectiveness of our strategies. Regular reports will be generated to review progress and identify areas for improvement. By setting specific targets and tracking key performance indicators, such as the reduction in ORT incidents and financial losses reported by retailers, we ensure that our efforts are both effective and tangible.

9. Does your organization have collaborative partnerships in place with local law enforcement?

Yes

a. If yes, describe these partnerships and explain how they will be utilized to support and measure the reduction of organized retail theft within the program's jurisdiction.

The Springfield Police Department has established strong partnerships with fellow law enforcement agencies across Lane County and the state of Oregon. These partnerships are crucial for our strategy to combat organized retail theft. We collaborate closely with the Eugene Police Department and the Oregon State Police, as well as other regional agencies. We have an established MOU with Lane County Sheriff's Office (attached) expressing their support of CRU's operations, and willingness to provide any resources necessary in our efforts. These collaborations allow for the sharing of intelligence and resources, enabling us to identify and track ORT networks that operate across multiple jurisdictions.

Joint operations and task forces are central to our approach, allowing us to pool resources and conduct comprehensive investigations that are beyond the capability of a single agency. Regular coordination meetings and information-sharing sessions help to ensure that all participating agencies are up to date on emerging ORT trends and can respond quickly to new threats. These partnerships also facilitate cross-jurisdictional surveillance and the execution of warrants, which are essential for dismantling complex ORT networks.

To measure the impact of these collaborative efforts, we utilize shared databases to track key metrics, such as the number of ORT-related arrests, charges, and convictions across jurisdictions. We also monitor the recovery of stolen goods and the disruption of fencing operations. Regular performance reviews and data analysis sessions with our law enforcement partners help us to assess the effectiveness of our strategies and make necessary adjustments. Through these coordinated efforts, we aim to significantly reduce ORT incidents and enhance public safety within our jurisdiction and beyond.

10. Does your organization have collaborative partnerships in place with retailers, community groups, or associations impacted by organized retail theft?

Yes

a. If yes, describe these partnerships and explain how they will be utilized to support and measure the reduction of organized retail theft within the program's jurisdiction.

Springfield Police Department maintains strong, collaborative partnerships with local retailers, which are essential to our strategy for reducing organized retail theft. These partnerships include large retail chains, shopping centers, and small businesses throughout Springfield and neighboring cities. By working closely with these retailers, we gain valuable insights into theft patterns and emerging threats, allowing us to tailor our enforcement strategies effectively. We have worked directly with asset protection from Target, Fred Meyer, Ross, Marshall's, Best Buy, Walmart, Big 5 Sporting Goods, Oregon Sports Stores, Cabelas, Kohls, Jerry's Home Improvement, Winco Foods, and others, maintaining regular communication with both local employees and regional/national ORC investigators. Please see the attached MOUs & Letters of Support from many of these retail partners for our already established relationships.

Retail partners provide real-time data on theft incidents, suspicious activities, and trends, which enhances our ability to conduct targeted operations. Regular meetings and information-sharing sessions with retail security teams ensure that we stay informed about new ORT tactics and can respond promptly. Training programs and operations conducted jointly with retailers help to educate employees on identifying and reporting ORT activities, improving overall vigilance and cooperation.

To measure the effectiveness of these partnerships, we track several key metrics in collaboration with our retail partners. These include the number of ORT incidents reported, the value of recovered merchandise, and the reduction in financial losses due to theft. Regular feedback sessions with retailers allow us to review these metrics and adjust our strategies as needed.

By fostering strong relationships with local retailers, we create a united front against ORT, enhancing our ability to prevent and respond to theft incidents. This collaborative approach not only helps in reducing ORT within our jurisdiction but also contributes to a safer and more secure retail environment for businesses and consumers alike.

11. Describe your program's specific and achievable time-based goals to reduce organized retail theft within your jurisdiction.

Our program has outlined specific, time-based goals to effectively reduce organized retail theft within Springfield and the surrounding areas. Between July 1st, 2024 and June 30th, 2025, we aim to conduct 18 planned operations, consisting of retail blitzes, undercover surveillance of probable fencing operations, and any other applicable mission which presents itself and allows us to target known ORT hotspots and offenders. This will involve enhancing our surveillance capabilities and improving coordination with retail partners.

Within this year, our goal is to identify and dismantle as many of the major fencing operations as possible by utilizing advanced investigative techniques and regional collaboration. Concurrently, we plan to implement a comprehensive public awareness campaign to educate retailers and the community about ORT prevention, aiming for a tangible increase in reported suspicious activities.

By the end of the grant period, we strive to achieve a noticeable reduction in ORT-related incidents and a corresponding decrease in financial losses reported by retailers. Additionally, we aim to enhance our data analytics capabilities to better track and predict ORT patterns, ensuring more proactive and targeted interventions. Our long-term goal, extending beyond the grant period, is to be known within our region as a model for coordinated enforcement against ORT, specifically amongst other local law enforcement agencies and retail partners. These goals are designed to create a significant and lasting impact on reducing ORT within our jurisdiction and beyond.