

August 28, 2025

Director Monica Alexander
Criminal Justice Training Commission

First Assistant Attorney General Maureen Johnston
Office of the Attorney General

Director Alexander and Ms. Johnston:

On behalf of Washington's 281 cities and towns, we write with significant concerns about equitable access to the \$100 million in public safety grants created in House Bill 2015 this year. The Commission's recently released criteria for applications uses an overly narrow interpretation that places undue burdens upon cities which contract with external agencies to provide law enforcement services. We believe this interpretation of HB 2015 is inconsistent with the Washington Constitution as well as the language and intent of the new law. This must be revised urgently to help all cities and towns have the same access to these funds, including clear guidance about how to apply.

As described in CJTC's HB 2015 [guidance published August 19](#), "only local and tribal law enforcement agencies that meet all program requirements are eligible to apply. Local municipalities that wish to apply for grants will be able to submit joint applications with qualifying law enforcement agencies."

Cities are the law enforcement agency for their jurisdictions, regardless of whether the elected city council has opted to provide that service through an in-house police department or via a contract for services with a county or another city.

We respectfully request that you clarify the guidance to authorize all cities to apply directly for funds, rather than creating a joint application requirement not contained in HB 2015 or elsewhere for those that contract for law enforcement services. A requirement that cities which contract with external agencies to provide enforcement services to "submit joint applications" with their contracted service providers places those cities at a disadvantage in accessing needed funding, unnecessarily restricts the broad purposes of the grants provided in HB 2015, and interprets HB 2015 incorrectly within state law.

Contracted service providers do not have authority to set fiscal policy or apply for grants on behalf of cities, nor would an outside entity have authority to legally bind the city to the terms of the grant agreement. This power is not transferred from the city governing body by the interlocal cooperation contracts cities and sheriff's offices or city police departments enter into under RCW 39.34. Cities have authority under Article XI, Section 11 of the Washington State Constitution to "make and enforce" public safety policy. This *agency* is not surrendered or superseded when a sheriff's office or another police department is contracted to provide law enforcement services inside city limits. The city is the law enforcement agency, as is evident in the requirements under RCW 35A.12.020 (mayor-council cities) and 35A.13.080 (council-manager cities) for cities to appoint a chief law enforcement officer, even in those cases where the city contracts for law enforcement services under RCW 39.34. Police departments within cities are not separate entities from the city, and the police chief reports to the city manager or mayor.

In addition, HB 2015 explicitly creates a funding source for a broad spectrum of public-safety solutions within and adjacent to law enforcement that would be disadvantaged by the Commission's narrow interpretation of grant eligibility. Empowering a contracted law enforcement agency to gatekeep grant applications inhibits "contract cities" from seeking grants that are not aligned with the contracted service provider's self-interest – even though HB 2015 explicitly says grants can be used for many purposes besides paying for policing.

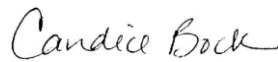
For example, the potential grant uses listed in Part 1, Section 101 (7) include:

"(c) Funding broader law enforcement and public safety efforts including, but not limited to, emergency management planning, environmental hazard mitigations, security personnel, community outreach and assistance programs, alternative response programs, and mental health crisis response."

Elsewhere, HB 2015 prioritizes grant applications from applicants establishing or maintaining "co-response teams or community law enforcement programs," each of which may or may not include employees of the contracted law enforcement service provider.

Cities that contract interlocally for police services continue to be the law enforcement agency and must retain their Constitutional authority to decide on their public safety priorities, which necessarily includes constructing grant applications and the personnel and policy decisions authorized by HB 2015. We request that CJTC remove the barrier of requiring that cities get permission from their service provider to co-sign grant applications.

Sincerely,


Candice Bock
Government Relations Director


Sheila Gall
General Counsel

cc: Nathan Olson, Public Safety Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor