

Utilizing COPS Grant Funding for CrisisGo's Student Threat Assessment



The Challenge

Wayzata Public Schools in Minnesota maintains a proactive approach to school safety. Kristin Tollison, Director of Administrative Services for Wayzata Public Schools informed that the district has a great partnership with their local police department, and the district is fortunate to have critical safety resources like cameras, badge systems, fob systems, secure entries, and School Resource Officers (SRO) in place.

To continue to move the district towards increased school safety, Wayzata Public Schools sought to implement a system for Student Threat Assessments. Tollison researched potential threat assessment systems, and having already been familiar with CrisisGo's digital safety platform, she looked into CrisisGo's threat assessment system as well. Deciding to pursue COPS grant funding to purchase CrisisGo's safety solution, the district needed to strategically research and meet specific grant requirements.

The Solution

Tollison described the grant application process as a sort of a puzzle. Similar to many other school districts, Tollison had to attack the grant application process solo. She was able to reach out to a Bismarck, ND school district to share safety resources and information on Bismarck's previously successful grant.



Customer Profile

Wayzata Public Schools is a community of teachers and students located in the Twin Cities' western suburbs. Extending from the north shore of Lake Minnetonka, we encompass 38 square miles of beautiful countryside, lakeside communities and growing suburbs.

- Industry:** Education
- Region:** Wayzata, MN
- Total Buildings:** 16
- Total Students:** 12,000
- Total Parents:** 18,000
- SIS (Roster):** Skyward
- Customer Since:** 2019

// When there are limited resources, you have to find really meaningful ways to get the resources for safety in a part of the structure. //

Kristin Tollison

Director of Administrative Services
Wayzata Public Schools

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The Solution Cont.

Tollison described the process as: "It was just going through the steps and making sure we had very carefully followed the fonts and margins and the data that they wanted and the budget."

Fortunately, Tollison had previous grant experience from working with a team on Drug Free Communities grants, and she had successfully received funding from that grant twice. She said that her approach involved working on the application periodically and then carefully combing through it.

According to Tollison, the hardest part of the process was the actual filing of the documents for the application. She stated, "Filing it and getting it through all those government portals, that alone is a gauntlet of trial and error." Tollison characterized the process as frustrating and explained that the application process took place in the middle of COVID, which made it difficult to track down the various team members who had to sign off on parts of the application, as everyone was working remotely and social distancing.

In addition to having to track down different individuals for access to information and signatures, Tollison also indicated that it was difficult to know exactly where each part of the application needed to be filed online. She gave the example that they had two letters of support from their local law enforcement, but struggled to find where that content was meant to go. In the end, the district was successful due to their diligent efforts, and they moved forward with CrisisGo's Student Threat Assessment system.

The Results

When asked about having assistance from a 3rd party would have helped her through the grant application process, Tollison responded: "It certainly would have." She added, "I'm not a grant writer by any stretch, but I have done enough to kind of know the pattern. Certainly, if you hadn't done it or if it was the first time through, it would be helpful to have someone that could even

review it. That probably would have been the most useful for me, to have someone objective and outside of our community review it and make sure I hit everything because I didn't really have a team to review it."

Tollison shared that what really assisted her in the application process was that the school district was already prepared. She stated, "One of the nice things for us is we are in a continuous improvement in that area, so we always have our 'what's next' thing we want to tackle. Threat assessment teams and full implementation of radios was on our list for as soon as funding, energy, time or resources became available, we wanted to tackle as soon as possible."

According to Tollison, it isn't a formal process to come up with their needed safety improvements, but they continue to perform needs assessments and maintain a continued dialogue about future improvements to safety. The district plans to do walk throughs of their buildings in December to review areas of improvement in order to "have a list of 5 things to work on next," Tollison said.

Reflecting on the success of her application and the process itself, Tollison stated: "I think the keys were to actually, genuinely have a process, not just looking for the grant to buy something a one-time thing. I think the COPS grant really wants a system, something embedded in a system. At least the things we had to answer, it wasn't just 'oh we would really like to have this.' It was part of an ongoing safety initiative."

She added, "It had to be systematic, not just a one-time shot. That and just making sure you tick all the boxes of the information data. Even if it doesn't seem applicable to your school, it obviously is applicable to them. Just being very thorough in make sure that even if you don't think it applies to you, you acknowledge it." Tollison informed that the school district will begin the process of familiarizing SROs with CrisisGo this winter and begin rolling out the Student Threat Assessment system from there.

