How to Pay for Body Cameras with Grant Funding: A Step-by-Step Guide

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Grant money can pay for up to half of a body camera program, and the best time to prepare is months before an application opens. The federal FY2026 round closed on October 2, 2026, and Texas agencies have typically had to apply to the state program by mid-February. Agencies that line up their paperwork now will be ready when the next rounds open.

This guide covers the two programs most Texas agencies should know about, the steps to apply, how to build a budget that fits the rules, and the mistakes that get applications rejected.

The two main grant programs

Most agencies in Texas can draw on two sources: a federal program run by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), and a state program run by the Texas Office of the Governor. The state program is less competitive and asks for a smaller match, so many Texas agencies should start there.

	Federal: BJA Body-Worn Camera Policy and Implementation Program (BWCPIP)	Texas: Office of the Governor Body-Worn Camera Grant
Who can apply	Publicly funded law enforcement and correctional agencies, local and state governments, tribes, school districts, and public colleges	Texas DPS, cities, and counties
Total funding	Up to $13.2 million in FY2026	About $10 million per year
Number of awards	12 for law enforcement, 4 for corrections (FY2026)	Not capped; awards depend on demand
Largest award	Up to $2,000,000	No set maximum

	Federal: BJA Body-Worn Camera Policy and Implementation Program (BWCPIP)	Texas: Office of the Governor Body-Worn Camera Grant
Per-camera limit	Federal money can't exceed $2,000 per camera	None stated
Your match	Dollar for dollar (cash or in-kind)	25% cash
What it pays for	Buying or leasing cameras, plus building a full program	Cameras, video storage and retrieval systems, and cloud services
Grant period	36 months	12 months
Usual timing	Opens in late spring or summer; FY2026 closed October 2, 2026	Opens mid-December; due mid-February
Where to apply	Grants.gov, then JustGrants	eGrants (egrants.gov.texas.gov)

Agencies outside Texas should check with their own state's criminal justice grant office, since many states run similar programs.

Step by step: how to prepare and apply

1. **Count your officers and decide your goal.** Know how many cameras you need and whether this is a first program, an expansion, or a replacement of old cameras. The federal application asks for this directly.
2. **Register in SAM.gov early.** Federal applications require an active SAM.gov registration. For FY2026, BJA told applicants to start about a month before the Grants.gov deadline. Renewals can take weeks, so check your status now.
3. **Write or update your body camera policy.** Both programs require one. The federal grant asks for your final policy as a deliverable. Texas requires a policy that meets the Code of Criminal Procedure, including rules on when cameras are activated, how video is stored and backed up, and how footage is handled as evidence.
4. **Get your governing body on board.** Your city council or commissioners court will need to approve the application and commit the match. In Texas, this is usually a formal resolution naming the authorized official and the financial officer.
5. **Get a written vendor quote.** BJA allows vendor quotes to be attached to support your budget. A quote shows reviewers your numbers are real.

6. **Build your budget.** List each cost with its unit price and quantity. Keep federal dollars under $2,000 per camera, and show where your match comes from. See the budget tips below.
7. **Write the narrative.** The federal narrative is limited to 10 double-spaced pages. Reviewers score it on six parts: the need (5%), goals and objectives (15%), how you'll carry it out (30%), your agency's ability to manage it (30%), how you'll keep the program running after the grant (5%), and the budget (15%).
8. **Submit in two steps (federal).** First submit the SF-424 form in Grants.gov, then the full application in JustGrants about a week later. Missing the first deadline ends your application.
9. **Plan for reporting.** If you're funded, expect regular performance reports. Texas agencies must also report body camera program costs to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) every year.

Budget tips

A realistic budget covers more than the cameras: storage, mounts, chargers, and training add up. Reviewers look for costs that are reasonable and clearly explained.

- **Know the federal match math.** BJA calls it a 50% match, but it works out to dollar for dollar. For every federal dollar, your agency puts in one. Your match can be cash, or in-kind contributions such as staff time spent on training.
- **Stay under the per-camera cap.** Federal money can't exceed $2,000 per camera. That's a ceiling, not a target. A department that needs 20 cameras can request up to $40,000 in federal funds, but only what the project actually costs.
- **Don't forget storage.** Video storage is an ongoing cost that many agencies underestimate. The Texas program pays for storage and cloud services, which makes it a good fit for this part of the budget.
- **Show the cost of each item.** For example: 20 cameras at $366 each, 20 magnetic clips at $25 each, and one year of evidence software, each on its own line.
- **Plan for year two.** The federal narrative asks how you'll keep the program running once the grant ends. Name the budget line that will pay for replacements and storage after that.

A simple example. A 20-officer department plans a $20,000 program: cameras, accessories, storage, and training. Under the federal program, it could request $10,000 and provide a $10,000 match. Under the Texas program, the agency's 25% cash match would

be $5,000.

Common mistakes that sink applications

Many strong applications are weakened by avoidable paperwork problems. Watch for these:

- **Starting too late.** SAM.gov registration, a council resolution, and a written policy can each take weeks.
- **Leaving out the match.** BJA treats an application without the required match as ineligible.
- **Asking for more than $2,000 per camera** in federal funds.
- **Missing the first federal deadline.** If the SF-424 isn't in Grants.gov on time, you can't finish in JustGrants.
- **Skipping required forms.** State and local government applicants for the federal grant must include a signed certification from their chief executive, using BJA's template. Read every required item in the funding notice.
- **Going over the page limit.** A federal narrative longer than 10 pages, or in the wrong format, can lose points.
- **No plan for after the grant.** Reviewers want to see how you'll pay for storage and replacements later.

How Force Pro USA can help

Force Pro USA has supplied body cameras to more than 60 agencies since 2019, from single departments to multi-agency purchases. We can help with the parts of a grant application that depend on equipment:

- **Written quotes** for your budget, broken out by camera, accessory, and storage option
- **Camera choices that fit the cap**, with professional body cameras starting under $400 each
- **Our Grant Ready Kit**, a starting point for your application
- **Purchase orders on Net 20 terms** and tax-exempt orders once your grant is approved

Planning a grant application? Call Joe at (214) 288-0240 or email sales@forceprousa.com for a quote you can attach to your application.

Sources

- BJA FY2026 Body-Worn Camera Policy and Implementation Program notice (PDF)
- BJA funding opportunity page
- Texas Association of Counties: Body-Worn Camera Grant Program, FY2027