

**Describe why you selected this topic. Why is this topic of importance to your agency?
(max 500 words)**

The Berlin Police Department selected the Unmanned Aerial Systems and Drones topic because UAS technology offers a practical way for a small municipal police department to significantly expand its operational capabilities, improve response to critical incidents, and make more effective use of limited personnel. Berlin currently operates a single drone, but that equipment provides only limited capability. The Department believes the next step should not simply be the purchase of another aircraft, but the development and evaluation of a comprehensive UAS public-safety program incorporating multiple platforms, appropriate deployment infrastructure, trained personnel, formal policies, and measurable performance outcomes.

This topic is particularly important because Berlin is a small but growing community whose Police Department must serve both year-round residents and a substantial visitor population. Berlin's revitalized downtown, businesses, community events, and proximity to Ocean City create periods when the number of people requiring police and public-safety services is considerably greater than the Town's permanent population would suggest. With a relatively small police force, the Department must continually identify ways to improve response and situational awareness without relying solely on additional staffing. Berlin has been named the Coolest Small Town in America by Budget Travel. It has been featured in several national magazines, including *Southern Living*.

A comprehensive UAS capability can serve as a force multiplier within Berlin's broader public-safety and crime-response strategy. UAS resources can provide rapid aerial situational awareness during searches for missing or endangered persons, fleeing-suspect incidents and pursuits, barricaded-subject situations, critical incidents, wellness checks, and other emergencies. They can also support crime-scene documentation and digital evidence gathering while reducing the amount of time officers must spend performing certain tasks on foot or from patrol vehicles.

The project would also strengthen officer safety. During rapidly evolving or potentially dangerous incidents, aerial observation can provide officers and supervisors with information about locations, movements, hazards, and conditions before personnel are placed in potentially unsafe situations. This additional information can improve decision-making, deployment, coordination, and response.

Berlin selected this topic because it also provides an opportunity to develop a structured model for responsible UAS use by a smaller law-enforcement agency. The project will incorporate pilot training and certification, FAA compliance, formal policies and procedures, privacy and cybersecurity safeguards, community transparency, and systematic evaluation. Berlin will measure such factors as deployments, response times, officer-hours saved, successful searches or apprehensions, and other public-safety outcomes.

The Department therefore views UAS technology not as a stand-alone equipment purchase, but as an integrated component of a broader strategy to improve response, officer safety, operational efficiency, investigative capability, and community safety.

What are the major activities that your agency will implement if funded? (max 500 words)

If funded, the Berlin Police Department will develop, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) public-safety program that expands substantially upon the Department's current limited single-drone capability. Major activities will include acquisition and deployment of appropriate UAS technology, development of the operational framework necessary to use that technology effectively and responsibly, training of personnel, and ongoing evaluation of program results.

The Department will first finalize the operational design of the program and identify UAS platforms appropriate for different public-safety functions. Rather than relying on a single type of aircraft, Berlin anticipates developing a multi-platform capability that may include a larger UAS with thermal/infrared capability and extended flight time, along with other aircraft appropriate for specific operational situations. The Department will also evaluate strategically located or fixed-launch capability where operationally appropriate, feasible, and consistent with applicable requirements.

Grant funds will support procurement of UAS operational hardware and deployment infrastructure, software, connectivity and data systems, vehicle integration, and other equipment necessary to establish a reliable operational capability. Systems will be configured and integrated so that trained personnel can deploy UAS resources efficiently during time-sensitive incidents.

The Department will develop or strengthen formal policies and operating procedures governing UAS deployment. These activities will address authorized uses, supervisory approval, documentation, evidence handling, privacy protections, cybersecurity, data management, public transparency, and compliance with Federal Aviation Administration requirements and other applicable laws and regulations.

Berlin will provide pilot certification, advanced training, and operational instruction to designated personnel. Training will prepare operators and supervisors to use UAS resources safely and effectively during search and rescue and missing-person cases, fleeing-suspect incidents and pursuits, barricaded-subject situations, critical incidents, wellness checks, crime-scene documentation, digital evidence gathering, and other approved public-safety operations.

Following implementation and training, the Department will deploy the expanded UAS capability as part of its broader crime-response and public-safety strategy. UAS resources will be used to improve situational awareness, reduce response time when possible, assist officers in locating persons or suspects, document scenes, and provide information that can improve tactical decision-making and officer safety.

Finally, Berlin will conduct a structured evaluation throughout the 24-month project. The Department will collect information on deployments, response times, officer hours saved, successful searches or apprehensions, operational uses, and other public-safety outcomes. Results will be reviewed to identify needed adjustments, measure effectiveness, support community transparency, and determine which components should be sustained following the

federal award. The project is intended not simply to purchase equipment, but to establish and evaluate a comprehensive small-agency UAS public-safety model.

What are the final deliverables of the project? How do they contribute to the notice of funding opportunity goals and requirements? (max 250 words)

The final deliverables will be a fully developed and operational comprehensive UAS public-safety program that expands Berlin's current single-drone capability into a coordinated, multi-platform system. Deliverables will include acquired UAS aircraft and deployment hardware; necessary software, connectivity, data infrastructure, and vehicle integration; trained and appropriately certified UAS pilots; and formal policies and procedures governing deployment, supervision, documentation, evidence management, privacy, cybersecurity, transparency, and compliance with applicable FAA and FCC requirements.

Berlin will also produce an operational deployment framework integrating UAS resources into the Department's broader crime-response and public-safety strategy. The program will support approved missions such as search and rescue and missing-person cases, fleeing suspects and pursuits, barricaded subjects, critical incidents, wellness checks, crime-scene documentation, and digital evidence gathering.

A final major deliverable will be a documented evaluation of the 24-month pilot program. Berlin will collect and analyze information on UAS deployments, response times, officer hours saved, successful searches or apprehensions, operational effectiveness, and other public-safety outcomes. The Department will use these findings to identify needed improvements, determine which program components should be sustained, and document lessons applicable to other small law-enforcement agencies.

These deliverables directly advance the Microgrants program by creating an innovative pilot project that improves officer and public safety, increases organizational effectiveness, and integrates UAS technology into a larger crime-fighting strategy rather than treating equipment acquisition as the project itself.

Identify any current agency or other initiatives that complement or will be coordinated with the proposal. (max 250 words)

The proposed UAS program will complement several existing Berlin Police Department initiatives and will be integrated into the Department's broader public-safety and community-policing strategy.

Most directly, Berlin currently operates a single drone with limited capabilities. The proposed project will build upon that experience by creating a more comprehensive, structured UAS program incorporating multiple platforms, trained personnel, formal operating procedures, improved deployment capability, and systematic evaluation.

The project will also complement Berlin's existing data-informed community-policing and crime-prevention efforts. The Department currently reviews calls for service, incident reports,

recurring problem locations, officer observations, and community concerns to identify deployment priorities and adjust police resources as conditions change. UAS technology will provide an additional operational resource that can be deployed within this existing strategy when aerial situational awareness can improve response, officer safety, searches, investigations, or management of critical incidents.

Berlin is also pursuing broader modernization of its law-enforcement technology and information capabilities. Improvements to dispatch, records management, mobile field operations, information sharing, and real-time access to operational information are intended to help officers respond more efficiently and make better-informed decisions. The proposed UAS program will complement these efforts by providing additional real-time information and digital evidence during appropriate incidents.

Implementation will also be coordinated, as appropriate, with Town officials, emergency-response agencies, neighboring law-enforcement agencies, and other regional public-safety partners. Together, these initiatives support Berlin's continuing strategy of using technology, information, partnerships, and limited personnel more effectively to protect residents, businesses, and visitors.

What specific outcome(s) do(es) your agency expect to accomplish with this project? An outcome is a final result that comes from the implementation of this project. Outcomes should be measurable; explain how the project team will track or measure them—e.g., What data will you gather in order to assist with evaluating the effectiveness of the program? Why did you choose that data? (max. 500 words)

The Berlin Police Department expects the project to produce measurable improvements in operational response, officer safety, public safety, investigative capability, and the efficient use of limited police personnel. The principal outcome will be a demonstrated ability to use UAS technology as a force multiplier within the Department's broader crime-response and public-safety strategy.

One expected outcome is improved response to time-sensitive incidents. UAS resources may permit officers to locate missing or endangered persons, fleeing suspects, or other persons of concern more quickly and to obtain aerial situational awareness during barricaded-subject incidents, pursuits, wellness checks, searches, and other critical events. Berlin will track the number and type of UAS deployments, response and deployment times when measurable, time required to locate persons or suspects, and the number of searches or incidents in which UAS deployment contributed to a successful resolution.

A second expected outcome is increased officer safety and improved decision-making. During potentially dangerous incidents, UAS platforms can provide information regarding locations, movements, hazards, terrain, and other conditions before officers enter an area. The Department will document incidents in which UAS information influenced tactical decisions, reduced unnecessary officer exposure, assisted containment, or provided information unavailable through conventional observation.

The project is also expected to increase operational efficiency. Berlin is a small department serving both permanent residents and substantial visitor activity and must use personnel resources carefully. The Department will track estimated officer hours saved through UAS-assisted searches, scene documentation, aerial observation, and other functions that otherwise would require additional personnel or extended officer deployment. Where appropriate, Berlin will compare these results with similar incidents handled without UAS assistance.

Investigative outcomes will also be measured, including the number of crime scenes documented, digital-evidence products generated, investigations supported, and incidents in which UAS-derived information assisted identification, apprehension, documentation, or case development.

Berlin will establish baseline information where feasible and maintain deployment logs, incident records, training records, and program-performance data throughout the 24-month project. Supervisory personnel will periodically review results to identify trends, operational limitations, training needs, and opportunities for improvement.

These measures were selected because they assess not simply how often the equipment is used, but whether the UAS program actually produces faster responses, safer operations, more efficient use of personnel, stronger investigations, and measurable public-safety benefits. Results will guide program adjustments, future sustainability decisions, and Berlin's final evaluation of the comprehensive small-agency UAS pilot program.

How will the proposed activities increase the effectiveness of your law enforcement agency and promote public safety? (max. 250 words)

The proposed UAS program will increase the effectiveness of the Berlin Police Department by giving a small municipal agency a flexible force multiplier that can improve response, situational awareness, officer safety, and investigative capability.

UAS technology will allow trained personnel to obtain rapid aerial information during missing-person searches, fleeing-suspect incidents, pursuits, barricaded-subject situations, wellness checks, critical incidents, crime-scene documentation, and other approved public-safety operations. This information can help supervisors and responding officers understand conditions before personnel enter potentially hazardous areas, improving tactical decision-making and reducing unnecessary exposure to danger.

The program will also allow Berlin to use limited staffing more efficiently. A drone may be able to search large areas, observe inaccessible locations, document scenes, or provide continuing aerial observation without requiring the same number of officers who might otherwise be assigned to those tasks. This can preserve personnel for patrol, emergency response, community policing, and other essential responsibilities.

UAS capabilities will further enhance investigations by providing timely aerial imagery, digital evidence, and more complete documentation of crime scenes and critical incidents.

Thermal/infrared capability may also improve searches conducted in darkness or difficult conditions.

By integrating UAS technology into Berlin's broader public-safety and crime-response strategy, rather than treating it as a stand-alone equipment purchase, the Department expects to respond more efficiently, protect officers more effectively, improve investigative outcomes, and provide safer and more responsive service to residents, businesses, and visitors.

Please describe how these efforts will be sustained once the award ends. (max 250 words)

The Berlin Police Department will use the 24-month award period to establish a UAS program that can continue operating after federal funding ends. Grant funds will support the initial acquisition and implementation costs that are most difficult for a small municipal police department to absorb, including UAS platforms, deployment infrastructure, software and connectivity, vehicle integration, pilot certification and advanced training, program development, and initial maintenance.

Once these investments have been made, many of the project's most important components will remain in place without requiring comparable future expenditures. Berlin will retain the acquired aircraft and supporting equipment, trained and certified personnel, established policies and operating procedures, FAA-compliance practices, privacy and cybersecurity safeguards, deployment protocols, and the experience gained through two years of operational use.

During the grant period, the Department will also evaluate which UAS platforms, deployment approaches, and operational uses provide the greatest public-safety benefit. This will allow Berlin to concentrate future resources on the most effective components rather than maintaining capabilities that do not demonstrate sufficient value.

Following the award, the Department will incorporate reasonable recurring costs such as maintenance, software or connectivity, training updates, and equipment replacement into future departmental and Town budgeting as resources permit. Berlin will also pursue appropriate state, federal, and other funding opportunities when available.

By using the grant to create lasting equipment, trained personnel, policies, operational experience, and internal capacity, Berlin intends for the UAS program to become a sustainable component of its long-term public-safety strategy rather than a temporary grant-funded initiative.

Staff

Colonel Howard "Howie" Drewer was appointed as Berlin's next Chief of Police, effective Monday, April 20, 2026. He comes to the role with nearly three decades of combined law enforcement and military experience.

Chief Drewer most recently served as Assistant Chief of Police at the Salisbury Police Department, where he spent more than 27 years. During that time, he held leadership roles in

both Operations and Administration. He also worked as a detective with the Wicomico Narcotics Task Force and served as a member of the department's Tactical, or SWAT, unit.

Community policing was also a significant part of his career in Salisbury. He was involved in efforts aimed at strengthening the relationship between law enforcement and the people they serve. That focus on trust-building appears to be something he plans to carry into his new role.

Before stepping into law enforcement, Drewer served in the United States Army. He later continued that service through the Army Reserve, retiring at the rank of Sergeant Major. His military career included deployments to Bosnia, Korea, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

His record of recognition is equally impressive. Chief Drewer is a graduate of the FBI National Academy and has received multiple honors throughout his career. Those include Chief's Awards, Meritorious Service Awards, Exceptional Service Awards, and the Distinguished Service Award.

Describe the overall management and implementation plan for the project 250 words

The Berlin Police Department will provide overall management, fiscal oversight, and operational direction for the project. The Chief of Police or designated project director will oversee grant compliance, approve major expenditures and program activities, monitor implementation, and ensure that the UAS program remains consistent with Department policies, federal requirements, and the approved public-safety strategy.

A designated project coordinator will manage day-to-day implementation, maintain the project schedule, coordinate procurement and installation, arrange training and certification, maintain required documentation, and collect performance information. Department supervisory personnel will assist with operational deployment, policy implementation, pilot scheduling, training oversight, and review of UAS activities.

During the initial project phase, Berlin will finalize equipment specifications, procurement requirements, policies and procedures, FAA compliance measures, privacy and cybersecurity safeguards, and the performance-evaluation framework. The Department will then procure and integrate UAS platforms, deployment infrastructure, software, connectivity, and related systems.

Selected personnel will complete required pilot certification, advanced training, and operational preparation before expanded deployment begins. The UAS program will then be incorporated into approved law-enforcement and public-safety operations.

Throughout the 24-month period, project personnel will track deployments, response times, officer-hours saved, successful searches or apprehensions, investigative uses, and other measurable outcomes. Department leadership will periodically review performance, expenditures, operational issues, and training needs and make adjustments as necessary to ensure effective implementation, accountability, and long-term sustainability.

Describe your agency's plan to measure achievement of your proposed objectives and/or evaluate the effectiveness of the project. (max 250 words).

The Berlin Police Department will evaluate the project through systematic collection and review of operational, performance, and outcome data throughout the 24-month award period. Where feasible, the Department will establish baseline information from comparable incidents handled before expansion of the UAS program and will compare those results with grant-period performance.

The Department will maintain records of each UAS deployment, including the type of incident, purpose of deployment, response and deployment time, duration of use, personnel involved, and operational result. Performance measures will include the number and type of deployments; missing or endangered persons located; fleeing suspects located or apprehended; critical incidents supported; crime scenes documented; investigative or digital-evidence uses; estimated officer-hours saved; and incidents in which UAS information improved situational awareness or reduced officer exposure to potentially dangerous conditions.

Where appropriate, Berlin will compare UAS-assisted operations with similar incidents handled without UAS support to assess potential improvements in response time, staffing efficiency, search effectiveness, and operational outcomes.

The project coordinator will compile performance information, and Department supervisors and leadership will review results periodically to identify trends, training needs, operational limitations, and opportunities for improvement. Findings will be used to modify deployment procedures during the project and to determine which capabilities should be sustained after the award.

This evaluation will measure not simply how frequently UAS equipment is used, but whether the program produces meaningful improvements in law-enforcement effectiveness, officer safety, resource efficiency, and overall public safety.