

MARYLAND INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW AND COORDINATION (MIRC) SUBMISSION

Bureau of Justice Assistance FY 2026 Crisis Response Training Program

Applicant	Howard County, Maryland
Implementing Agency	Howard County Sheriff's Office
Project Title	Immersive Crisis Response and De-Escalation Training Initiative
Federal Funding Source	United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance
Funding Opportunity	FY 2026 Crisis Response Training Program
Opportunity Number	O-BJA-2026-172706
Funding Category	Category 1 – Training Program for Law Enforcement Agencies
Requested Federal Award	\$74,765.00
Project Period	November 1, 2026 – September 30, 2027
Project Site	Circuit Courthouse Training Room, 9250 Judicial Way, Ellicott City, Maryland 21043
Service Area	Howard County, Maryland



Office of the Sheriff

Howard County, Maryland

Marcus Harris
Sheriff

9/9/2026

Maryland Department of Planning
Maryland State Clearinghouse for Intergovernmental Assistance
120 East Baltimore Street, Suite 2000
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Re: Maryland Intergovernmental Review and Coordination – Bureau of Justice Assistance FY 2026 Crisis Response Training Program

Dear Maryland State Clearinghouse:

Howard County, Maryland, through the Howard County Sheriff's Office, respectfully submits the enclosed project for Maryland Intergovernmental Review and Coordination in connection with an application to the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, FY 2026 Crisis Response Training Program, Opportunity Number O-BJA-2026-172706.

The proposed project, titled the Howard County Sheriff's Office Immersive Crisis Response and De-Escalation Training Initiative, will establish an immersive virtual reality training capability at the Circuit Courthouse Training Room, 9250 Judicial Way, Ellicott City, Maryland 21043.

The project will provide sworn law-enforcement personnel with realistic, repeatable, and measurable scenario-based training focused on crisis recognition, communication, de-escalation, decision-making, tactical coordination, and appropriate intervention when interacting with individuals experiencing behavioral-health conditions, intellectual or developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, substance-use disorders, or traumatic brain injuries.

The proposed project does not include construction, demolition, excavation, expansion, or exterior alteration of the project site. The proposed equipment will be operated within an existing interior training room.

The requested federal award is \$74,765.00 for a 10-month project period beginning November 1, 2026. The federal funding opportunity does not require cost sharing.

Enclosed are the project narrative, budget narrative, project location and service-area information, staffing information, historic-preservation statement, and supporting documentation identified for intergovernmental review.



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Sheriff

Priority Funding Area status should be confirmed against the Maryland Department of Planning's current interactive Priority Funding Area map before final submission. No construction or physical site alteration is proposed.

Thank you for your review and consideration. Please contact the Howard County Sheriff's Office if additional information or documentation is required.

Sincerely,

Marcus Harris

Marcus Harris, Sheriff
Howard County Sheriff's Office
410-313-4202
maharris@howardcountymd.gov

PROGRAM NARRATIVE

A. Project Summary

Howard County, Maryland, through the Howard County Sheriff's Office, proposes to establish an Immersive Crisis Response and De-Escalation Training Initiative using a fully immersive virtual reality training system. The project will be located in the existing Circuit Courthouse Training Room at 9250 Judicial Way, Ellicott City, Maryland 21043.

The project will enhance the agency's ability to prepare sworn personnel for encounters involving individuals experiencing behavioral-health conditions, intellectual or developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, substance-use disorders, and traumatic brain injuries. The virtual reality system will permit participants to train simultaneously in the same simulated environment, allowing instructors to create realistic and evolving scenarios that require communication, coordination, de-escalation, decision-making, and appropriate intervention.

The project is directly aligned with Category 1 of the Bureau of Justice Assistance FY 2026 Crisis Response Training Program, which expressly permits law-enforcement agencies to implement crisis response and intervention training and virtual reality training systems designed for law enforcement that enable multiple participants to train simultaneously and integrate with existing programs. The federal notice of funding opportunity identifies virtual reality scenario-based training as an innovative technology for preventing crisis escalation. The application deadline is October 5, 2026, through Grants.gov, followed by October 13, 2026, through JustGrants.

B. Description of Need

The Howard County Sheriff's Office regularly trains personnel to respond safely and professionally to unpredictable encounters involving members of the public. Crisis situations may develop rapidly and may involve impaired judgment, emotional distress, behavioral-health symptoms, substance use, developmental or intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, or combinations of these factors.

The agency's existing classroom, practical, and scenario-based training provides an essential foundation, but traditional live scenarios require instructors, role players, facilities, scheduling, and other resources. They also provide limited opportunities to repeat the same scenario with controlled variations and objective performance measurement. An immersive virtual reality platform will address this gap by providing repeatable scenarios, instructor-controlled variables, measurable performance, and opportunities for multiple deputies to train together.

C. Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Improve the effectiveness of crisis-response skills among Howard County Sheriff's Office sworn personnel.

- Objective 1.1: Implement an immersive virtual reality crisis-response and de-escalation training capability during the first project year.
- Objective 1.2: Train designated instructors to operate the system, facilitate scenarios, evaluate performance, and maintain training records.

- Objective 1.3: Provide recurring scenario-based training to sworn personnel throughout the 10-month project period.
- Objective 1.4: Measure changes in knowledge, confidence, and demonstrated scenario performance through standardized pre-training and post-training assessments.

Goal 2: Increase the frequency, realism, consistency, and measurability of crisis-response training.

- Objective 2.1: Provide multi-participant scenarios in which deputies can train together and respond to evolving circumstances.
- Objective 2.2: Develop customized scenarios based on Howard County Sheriff's Office operational needs and verified local incident patterns.
- Objective 2.3: Establish a scenario library addressing behavioral-health crises, suicidal individuals, substance-use crises, developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injuries, and other priority encounters.
- Objective 2.4: Use performance data to identify recurring training gaps and modify future instruction.

D. Project Design and Implementation

Phase 1 – Procurement and Implementation

The Howard County Sheriff's Office will complete procurement, installation, configuration, and acceptance testing of the virtual reality system. The agency will establish project procedures, designate project staff, establish baseline measures, and coordinate implementation with the selected vendor.

Phase 2 – Instructor Development and Scenario Design

Designated instructors will receive vendor and program training. The project team will develop and configure scenarios based on the Bureau of Justice Assistance crisis-response training framework, agency policies, verified local data, and identified training gaps.

Phase 3 – Operational Training

The system will be integrated into the agency's ongoing training program. Deputies will participate in recurring multi-participant scenarios. Instructors will document participation and performance and will use the system's available analytics to guide remedial and advanced training.

Phase 4 – Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

The agency will compare pre-training and post-training results, track scenario completion, evaluate performance trends, and use results to improve scenarios and instructional practices.

VR Platform Requirements

- Fully immersive law-enforcement virtual reality environment.
- Multi-participant capability allowing multiple deputies to train together.
- Instructor-controlled scenarios and changing circumstances.
- Ability to customize scenarios for Howard County Sheriff's Office operational needs.

- Scenario performance tracking and reporting.
- Evidence-based crisis-response and de-escalation curriculum integrated with the technology.
- Software licensing, implementation support, instructor training, and technical support necessary to operate the system.
- Compatibility with the existing agency training program and facility.

Evaluation

- Number and percentage of intended personnel completing training.
- Number of training sessions and scenarios delivered.
- Pre-training and post-training knowledge scores.
- Participant confidence ratings.
- Scenario performance measures for communication, de-escalation, decision-making, tactical coordination, and appropriate intervention.
- Number of customized scenarios developed and used.
- Training gaps identified and corrective training implemented.

E. Capabilities and Competencies

The Howard County Sheriff's Office maintains an established Education and Training Section and an existing training infrastructure for sworn personnel. The agency routinely implements mandatory and specialized law-enforcement training and maintains training records and administrative procedures necessary to support a federally funded training initiative.

The project will be administered using existing county and agency procurement, financial management, grant-management, and training procedures. The project manager will coordinate procurement, implementation, vendor activities, scheduling, reporting, and performance measurement. Training personnel will operate the system and deliver the training.

The agency's existing technology and training environment will allow the proposed system to be integrated into current operations without construction or facility expansion.

F. Sustainability

The proposed project is designed as a sustainable training capability rather than a one-time equipment purchase. During the grant period, the Howard County Sheriff's Office will train internal instructors, develop a reusable scenario library, integrate the system into recurring training, and establish procedures for continued use and evaluation. After the grant period, the agency intends to continue using the system through existing training resources and future agency or grant funding, subject to available appropriations and allowable costs.

3. BUDGET NARRATIVE

Category	Description	Draft Amount
Equipment / Virtual Reality Training System	1 single trainee immersive virtual reality training system, including headsets, instructor/control equipment, necessary computing equipment, tracking equipment, and related hardware	\$56,245
Additional VR Trainee	1 single trainee immersive virtual reality training system	\$18,520
TOTAL	Total requested federal award	\$74,765.00

Budget justification: Each proposed cost is directly connected to the acquisition, implementation, operation, and evaluation of an immersive virtual reality crisis-response training capability.

4. AREAS TO BE SERVED / PROJECT LOCATION

Project Site: Circuit Courthouse Training Room

Address: 9250 Judicial Way, Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

County: Howard County, Maryland

Service Area: Howard County, Maryland

The Howard County Sheriff's Office is headquartered at 9250 Judicial Way, Ellicott City, Maryland 21043, and the proposed training room is located within the Circuit Courthouse facility. The agency's Education and Training Section will use the proposed training system to provide instruction to sworn personnel.

The project will not involve construction, demolition, excavation, building expansion, exterior alteration, or ground disturbance. Equipment will be installed and operated within the existing interior training room.

5. STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

The project does not require creation of new permanent positions.

- Project Manager: Existing Howard County Sheriff's Office personnel designated by agency leadership to coordinate grant implementation, procurement, reporting, and compliance.

- Training Instructors: Existing Education and Training Section personnel designated and trained to operate the virtual reality system, conduct scenarios, evaluate participants, and maintain training records.
- Fiscal / Grant Administration: Existing Howard County financial and grant-management personnel will administer financial documentation, procurement, reimbursement, and reporting in accordance with county and federal requirements.
- Vendor Support: The selected vendor will provide allowable implementation, system configuration, instructor training, technical support, and maintenance services.

No significant increase in staffing is anticipated. Training will be incorporated into existing personnel training schedules.

6. SECTION 106 / HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The proposed project will be located within the existing Circuit Courthouse Training Room at 9250 Judicial Way, Ellicott City, Maryland 21043.

The project consists of acquiring and installing an immersive virtual reality training system and associated equipment and software inside an existing interior training room. The project does not include construction, demolition, excavation, rehabilitation, exterior alteration, or modification of historic structures.

No ground disturbance is proposed. No building or structure will be demolished, expanded, rehabilitated, or physically altered as part of this project.

Based on the current scope, the project is not anticipated to affect historic properties.

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424

*** 1. Type of Submission:**

- ☐ Preapplication
☒ Application
☐ Changed/Corrected Application

*** 2. Type of Application:**

- ☒ New
☐ Continuation
☐ Revision

*** If Revision, select appropriate letter(s):**

*** Other (Specify):**

*** 3. Date Received:**

Completed by Grants.gov upon submission.

4. Applicant Identifier:

5a. Federal Entity Identifier:

5b. Federal Award Identifier:

State Use Only:

6. Date Received by State:

7. State Application Identifier:

8. APPLICANT INFORMATION:

*** a. Legal Name:** Howard County Government

*** b. Employer/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN):**

52-6000965

*** c. UEI:**

LJPAM296M118

d. Address:

*** Street1:** 3430 Court House Drive

Street2:

*** City:** Ellicott City

County/Parish: Howard

*** State:** MD: Maryland

Province:

*** Country:** USA: UNITED STATES

*** Zip / Postal Code:** 21043-4300

e. Organizational Unit:

Department Name:

Howard County Sheriff's Office

Division Name:

f. Name and contact information of person to be contacted on matters involving this application:

Prefix: Mrs.

*** First Name:** Meaghan

Middle Name:

*** Last Name:** McKelvey

Suffix:

Title: Senior Administrative Analyst

Organizational Affiliation:

*** Telephone Number:** 410-313-4201

Fax Number:

*** Email:** mmckelvey@howardcountymd.gov

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424

* 9. Type of Applicant 1: Select Applicant Type:

B: County Government

Type of Applicant 2: Select Applicant Type:

Type of Applicant 3: Select Applicant Type:

* Other (specify):

* 10. Name of Federal Agency:

Bureau of Justice Assistance

11. Assistance Listing Number:

16.738

Assistance Listing Title:

Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program

* 12. Funding Opportunity Number:

O-BJA-2026-172690

* Title:

BJA FY 2026 Byrne State Crisis Intervention Formula Program

13. Competition Identification Number:

Title:

14. Areas Affected by Project (Cities, Counties, States, etc.):

Add Attachment

Delete Attachment

View Attachment

* 15. Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project:

Howard County Sheriff's Office Immersive Crisis Response and De-Escalation Training Initiative

Attach supporting documents as specified in agency instructions.

Add Attachments

Delete Attachments

View Attachments