

March 8, 2022

MEMORANDUM

To: Public Safety and Human Services Committee
From: Greg Doss, Analyst
Subject: Council Bill (CB) 120280: Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Ordinance

On Tuesday, March 8, 2022, the Public Safety and Human Services Committee (PSHS) will discuss Council Bill (CB) 120280. The CB would appropriate \$2.3 million to the Seattle Police Department (SPD) in funding from the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for the UASI grant program. Members of SPD's Command Staff will be available at the March 8th meeting to address questions about the grant and associated expenditures. This memo provides background information for that discussion.

Background – Council history with 2021-22 UASI Grant

[Ordinance 126469](#), passed by the Council on November 22, 2021, accepted funding from non-City sources, including the acceptance of a \$3.08 million UASI grant from the Department of Homeland Security. The 2022 Adopted Budget ([Ordinance 126470](#)), passed on the same day, appropriated \$750,000 of UASI grant funding to the Seattle Fire Department (SFD) to assist SFD in its efforts to build and sustain the capabilities necessary to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism.

Through these actions, the Council accepted all UASI grant funding for the federal fiscal year 2021-22, but only authorized spending the SFD's portion (\$750,000). This delayed authorizing the remaining \$2.3 million of spending that was proposed for the SPD's budget, until the members of the Council's Public Safety and Human Services Committee could conduct a more detailed analysis of how SPD intends to spend the UASI funds.

SPD has indicated that it will use the UASI funds for: program management and sustainment; citizen preparedness and outreach; contract analysts; equipment and training to respond to acts of terrorism; and mass care shelter planning with the Human Services Department. SPD has also provided additional information on the specific equipment purchases that will be made by the department as well as partner agencies in the UASI region. This information was distributed previously to the Committee and is attached to the Committee agenda.

UASI Grant Program and UASI Region

The UASI grant is administered by the Emergency Management Division of the Washington State Military Department. No City matching funds are required for the UASI grant. The term

of the grant extends for the 2021-22 Federal Fiscal Year and funding must be spent by December 31, 2023.

The UASI grant funds projects and equipment are intended to support several jurisdictions throughout the Seattle urban area. Project funding decisions are made through a collaborative process involving multiple public safety emergency response agencies located throughout Snohomish, King, and Pierce Counties. SPD is the single conduit for all DHS funding that is then distributed to partner jurisdictions as SPD has the staff and processes in place to meet federal guidelines and audit requirements.

Potential impacts on vulnerable or historically disadvantaged communities

It is well accepted that law enforcement agencies over surveil communities of color. In Seattle, a recent Center for Policing Equity study found that between 2015 and 2019 that SPD was more likely to stop and search Black and Native American persons, even though their White counterparts were more likely to be found with a weapon than any other group.

To the extent that UASI grant funds are used to purchase equipment that allows for greater surveillance of vulnerable communities, there is a potential that SPD could perpetuate a system where disparities in arrests and incarceration create devastating consequences on Seattle's communities of color; including the continuation of a cycle of poverty caused by exposure to the criminal justice system.

Potential Amendments

If there are concerns about some or all of the proposed spending, the Council could consider imposing a proviso that would condition or restrict grant expenditures. This could include:

1. Prohibiting use of grant funds for specific projects or purchases; or
2. Conditioning use of grant funds to only be used in accordance with specified legislative intent.

Next Steps:

If the Committee votes on CB 120280 at the March 22, 2022, meeting, final action on the legislation could occur April 5, 2022.

If the Council does not authorize spending authority for specific equipment or projects, SPD indicated that they would attempt to shift that project funding to another agency to preserve the interoperability of the UASI program as a whole. It is possible that the department may request that the State Emergency Management Department distribute the funding directly to other agencies and thereby bypass SPD as the pass-through agent. The exact mechanics of such a change are unknown and may be complicated as the City has already accepted the UASI grant award and serves as the regional grant administrator. SPD noted that returning the UASI

grant award and/or transferring the administration of the grant program would have major consequences for the region. Assistant Chief Todd Kibbee and Chief Operating Officer Brian Maxey will be available to field any questions at the PSHS Committee meeting on March 8.

cc: Asha Venkataraman, Interim Lead Analyst,
Aly Pennucci, Deputy Director