

IDOT suspends step grant for Alton Police Department

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During a recent, unrelated disciplinary action within the Alton Police Department, discrepancies were discovered in the reporting of data associated with the department's Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) Sustained Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) Grant.

Upon learning of the discrepancies, Police Chief Jason "Jake" Simmons ordered a random review of grant records in which further discrepancies were found. At that time, Chief Simmons contacted IDOT, the City Attorney and the Mayor's office to advise them of the situation. IDOT instructed Chief Simmons to immediately suspend all pending grant activities and begin a complete internal audit of all records dating back to the initiation of this grant in 2009.

On Wednesday, January 28, 2015, two IDOT officials reviewed the initial findings and advised Chief Simmons to continue the internal audit. The officials also indicated they would be contacting The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the federal agency responsible for the grant, for a complete audit to be conducted as soon as possible. Finally, the officials advised Chief Simmons to contact the Illinois State Police (ISP) for an independent investigation.

"As Chief of Police, it is my responsibility to ensure the integrity of all aspects of the Alton Police Department," stated Chief Simmons. "Part of that responsibility involves taking action as soon as any indication of possible improprieties arises. We will continue to cooperate with state and federal agencies to ensure a complete and thorough investigation of all grant records."

"I am committed to complete transparency and open dialogue with the citizens of Alton," Chief Simmons continued. "The law dictates that the contents of ongoing investigations are confidential, but we will release information as soon as allowed by law."

"It is imperative that we remain vigilant in our oversight of all taxpayer money, including grants," commented Mayor Brant Walker. "I commend Chief Simmons for his quick action in addressing this serious issue."

"I have full faith and confidence in the ability of the hard-working officers of the Alton Police Department to protect our city and I urge everyone to refrain from making any assumptions or judgments regarding this issue until the completion of a thorough investigation by the outside agencies responsible for the this grant," Walker said.

Further Information:

Sustained Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) grants are designed to increase occupant protection usage and to reduce DUI through hire back enforcement. This program provides for participation in special enforcement campaigns such as “Click It or Ticket” and “Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over”. This program includes up to ten (10) enforcement periods. Enforcement details during the Thanksgiving, Christmas/New Years, St. Patrick's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day campaigns are required for these grants.

Cited from www.trafficsafetygrantsillinois.org