

# *Canine Drug Program Cost Analysis*



Idaho State Police

# Canine Drug Program Cost Analysis

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Several canine drug and narcotic programs have been funded by the Edward Byrne Memorial Grant Program in Idaho. The following is a cost analysis aimed at understanding the essential ingredients for keeping and maintaining a successful drug/patrol dog program.

For this analysis, several canine handler officers were interviewed. The officers offered insight into the complexities of purchasing a good dog, and keeping the dog well trained. Based on the knowledge gained from canine handlers, this report touches on the components needed for a canine team to be effective. The cost estimates are taken from a combination of averaging figures given from previous grants, as well as averaging some of the actual costs to buy different equipment. Table 1 lists all the items determined to be necessary for a successful drug/patrol dog program. Some of the items will be analyzed individually.

**Table 1. Items Needed for a Successful K-9 Program**

Item	Average Cost Based on Estimates
1. Dog, plus dog and handler training (room, board and travel included)	14,198.00
2. Vehicle kennel, fan, tinted windows etc. (depends on if outfitting car or truck)	2,191.00
3. Kennel and dog house for home (with cement pad)	929.45
4. Yearly supply of food per dog (high quality)	311.25
Vet bills per year if there are no major problems	406.25
5. Bite suit for patrol dogs	1,522.00
6. Muzzle for patrol dogs	225.00
7. Bite sleeve	186.93
8. E-collar for patrol and some narcotics dogs	439.00
9. Leash, collar, tracking equipment, toys, food bowl	1,014.90
10. Video system for car	<u>2,566.67</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,990.45</b>
<b>Average amount requested since 1995</b>	14,073.11
<b>Average salary of officer</b>	31,682.00
<b>Average grant total cost</b>	57,773.50
<b>Average cost from estimates</b>	<u>55,672.45</u>

**1. Dog, Plus Dog and Handler Training (Room, Board and Travel Included) =  
\$14,198.00**

The dog, plus dog and handler training were all combined into one category because this expense would usually be part of the initial investment into acquiring the dog. Estimates for the value of the dog varied between \$1,000 to \$10,000. Differences depend on what type of work the dog will be doing.

Narcotics dogs are the least expensive, as any dog showing a willingness to work can be used. Dogs used in narcotic operations can be purchased from the pound, decreasing the initial investment into the dog tremendously. Patrol dogs, on the other hand, need to be of a certain breed. Generally, the best dogs come from Europe and are of a Sheppard or Malanois breed. Dog handlers will typically try to search out training schools in the US that offer dogs from overseas.

The reason European dogs are the best is because they are bred to be used in Schutzhund competition and the French Ring. Europeans take this sport very seriously, and generate high drive within their dogs. As Sgt. Rudy Lopez from Madison County stated:

"If you study German Shepards and vendors, the ones that are more successful selling their dogs are the ones that advertise "quality imported dogs." The problem with American bred dogs is that they take a good old blood line and mix it up so many times that you lose good drive and temperament. I'm not saying that there aren't good dogs bred here, its just that they (Europeans) are kind of the pros at breeding dogs law enforcement officers want as police dogs. If they want to stay competitive, most of the vendors and schools across the country import their dogs from Europe."

The cost of dog and handler training varies considerably depending on where the handler decides to go. Training generally costs around \$3,000. Travel expenses can add up quickly. Regardless of where the handler goes for the training, it is recommended that the school trains the dog and handler for at least one month.

There are many places that sell and train dogs. The police department interested in selecting a good dog should shop around to find the best candidate possible. This can add expense to the initial investment of acquiring a good dog, but will be well worth it. It

is also wise to ensure the vendor offers a warranty on the dog in case things don't work out. It may be months before the department is confident in the abilities of the dog they have just purchased because the dog first needs to experience a variety of situations while on the job. During interviews with different K-9 handlers, the best programs were recommended to be from Florida, Alabama, and California. But as Sgt. Allen Olsen from the Boise Police Department reported "If you ask six different agencies, you'll get six different answers." Everyone will have a favorite spot they like to get well trained dogs. Also, it may not be the fault of the vendor if the police department gets a poor dog.

There are various components influencing whether the officer and the dog get along enough to make a successful K-9 unit. These include: (1) the natural instincts of the dog, (2) the training of the dog, (3) the willingness, experience and training of the handler, and (4) rigorous, continuous training to keep the dog in shape. Even if the department acquires a good dog, the unit will fail if they are not willing to keep up the physical conditioning of the dog. All of these factors must be accounted for in the budget to understand the full costs of a good program.

## **2. Outfitting Vehicle to Support K-9: Kennel, Fan, Tinted Windows etc. = \$2,191.00**

In understanding all the expenses involved in starting a canine drug program, the cost of specially outfitting the vehicle the dog will ride in must also be figured in. Depending on whether the dog will ride in a car or truck will have an impact on the amount of money needed. If using a truck, a camper shell will need to be purchased, which generally adds \$1,000 to the overall price. A car would also need to be outfitted specifically for the dog. A "K-9 Conversion kit" for a car can cost around \$400.

Regardless of vehicle type, an air monitoring system is needed to ensure the dog is kept at a comfortable temperature. A dog who is overheated will breathe out of its mouth to cool off and will be useless trying to detect anything with its nose. A temperature system can run anywhere between \$815 to \$2500 depending on the features the agency wants included. The average estimate for outfitting the vehicle for a canine is about \$2,191.00.

**3. Kennel and Dog House for Home (With Cement Pad) = \$929.45**

Narcotic and Patrol dogs are generally kept at their handler's house, which adds an additional expense. A dog kennel and house needs to be purchased for the dog to be kept at the handler's house.

**4. Yearly Supply of Food Per Dog (High Quality) = \$311.25**

**Vet Bills Per Year if There Are No Major Problems = \$406.25**

The amount of money needed for a year's supply of dog food and vet bills for one year was calculated by averaging estimates given in canine program Byrne grant budgets, as well as estimates given from officers during interviews. To understand the true costs associated with a canine drug program, this figure would need to include all the years the dog would be in service. As this report is focused mainly on the start-up fees of drug dog programs, the figures are only based on one year.

**Other Equipment:**

**5. Bite Suit for Patrol Dogs = \$1,522.00**

**6. Muzzle for Patrol Dogs = \$225.00**

**7. Bite Sleeve = \$186.93**

**8. E-Collar for Patrol and Some Narcotics Dogs = \$439.00**

**9. Leash, Collar, Tracking Equipment, Toys, Food Bowl = \$1014.90**

**10. Video System for Car = \$2,566.67**

**Total Amount Required for Establishing Program = \$23,990.45**

The total cost required to establish a canine program within a law enforcement agency is estimated to be about \$23,990.45. This number does not include the cost of the vehicle (if one needs to be purchased). The cost is also based on the average amount needed to purchase the items. Agencies may find ways to reduce costs in various areas, therefore, this may not reflect what departments actually spend.

Nine different canine drug programs were funded through Byrne from 1995 to 2003. The average amount requested for the nine programs was \$14,073.11, not adjusted for inflation. This is below the amount estimated to be the average amount required to start up a canine program: \$23,990.45. It is assumed that many Byrne funded canine programs already have some of the equipment needed, or are cutting costs in other ways. They may choose a closer location for training and reduce travel expenses, or may already have an outfitted vehicle to use. One grant in particular received a donated drug dog, thereby reducing the overall budget needed for their program. It is also possible the agencies may not be requesting the full amount needed as they may be purchasing some of the required equipment as match for their grant.

**Canine Handler Salary = \$31,682.00**

The average salary of the canine handler must also be included to help understand the true costs associated with a canine program. The salary of the officers in Byrne grant awards averaged \$31,682.00 and were listed as match contributed by the agency.

**Total**

After averaging all the estimates from officer interviews regarding the entire amount needed for a successful canine program (including the salary of the officer), the total was \$55,672.45. This number is fairly close to the average amount Byrne grant programs have said the total cost for their program will be (including the salary of the officer and other estimated expenses that were not included in the amount requested): \$57,773.50. Therefore, the canine drug programs that have received funding through Byrne have stayed close to the estimated actual costs of running a canine program.