

OVW Fiscal Year 2024 Resource Center Pre-Application Information Session Transcript

ASMA NORAY: Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for joining us. I'm Asma Noray, and I am a Grant Program Specialist within the Training and Technical Assistance Unit here at the Office on Violence Against Women, or OVW. I am joined by Alanda Thomas from the Grants Financial Management Division and Marnie Shiels, attorney advisor. Today, we'll be discussing the Fiscal Year 2024 solicitation for the Resource Center on Workplace Responses to Assist Victims of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. For simplicity, I'll be referring to the program as the "Resource Center" for the remainder of the presentation. Because we won't have time to cover every section in detail, I'll be focusing on specific and key sections of the solicitation and also opening up the conversation for questions at the end. I recommend having the solicitation open with you throughout this webinar so that you can follow on the sections that I am referring to.

The goal of the Resource Center is to provide information and assistance to employers, labor organizations, and victim service providers to aid in their efforts to develop and implement workplace responses to assist victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, and sexual harassment. The Resource Center also aims to reach a variety of different types of employers with technical and technical assistance resources, including private companies, federal agencies, public entities such as public institutions of higher education, and state and local governments. Some examples of what the Resource Center can provide are training to promote a better understanding of workplace assistance, conferences and other educational opportunities, and developing protocols and model workplace policies that employers can use.

As a result of the Violence Against Women Act reauthorization in 2022, we have several key points to highlight in terms of changes to the Resource Center Program. These changes have not yet been implemented. Firstly, the reauthorization required a focus on outreach to employers with fewer than 20 employees and as part of that, there will be a requirement to develop a website that will provide resources specifically for these types of employers. Additionally, while the program has focused on sexual harassment in the past, this was made a more specific focus of the Resource Center more recently and applicants should aim to highlight explicitly how they will address sexual harassment within their proposal. Lastly, the Resource Center will now include a Pathways to Opportunity Pilot Program, and the goal of this is to support survivors seeking employment. This pilot program will focus on building collaborations between victim service providers, workforce development programs, and other educational and vocational institutions so they can help survivors in seeking employment. The pilot program should also be centered around better serving traditionally marginalized groups and culturally specific organizations.

Now that we've gone through an overview of the program, I will be discussing how to apply and key components of the application process. The application process is a two-step process, so that's very important to keep in mind. First, applicants will complete standard forms in Grants.gov, and the deadline for that is Tuesday, December 10, and then complete the majority of the application in the JustGrants system by Thursday, December 12 at 8:59 p.m. Eastern. Grants.gov includes the SF-424 and

SF-LLL. These are standard forms that I'll be describing a little bit more in detail later in the presentation. Once that component of the application is submitted, the applicant will receive an automatic email from JustGrants instructing them to continue the remainder of the application in JustGrants. We highly recommend submitting all required documents no later than 24 to 48 hours before each individual deadline. We have unfortunately seen applicants wait until the last few hours to begin to uploading, only to run out of time. Some other things to keep in mind: Once you click submit on JustGrants, you will no longer be able to add any documents to your application. This means that if you discover you forgot to upload a required document, you will need to complete the Grants.gov submission again. But that's only possible if the first Grants.gov deadline has not passed. So please make sure you do not press the submission button in JustGrants until you are 100% positive all the documents you uploaded are correct, and all the required information is there. OVW will not alert you if there are documents missing in your application. Just to help out timing-wise, we've also provided a suggested dates for completing registration in SAM.gov and Grants.gov, so please aim to register in both of those by November 19. Lack of registration or not renewing your registration on SAM or Grants.gov will not be considered a valid reason to request late submission.

This slide provides general information and resources for submitting your application and for both the Grants.gov and the JustGrants process. We have several trainings and job aids that you can refer to as you're navigating the application, so please make sure to take advantage of these and reach out to us if you have any questions. Moving on to award periods and amounts. This program will fund one award of up to \$1,850,000 for a period of performance of 24 months. The award period will begin on February 1, 2025. One thing to note, OVW does have the discretion to make awards for greater or lesser amounts than the \$1.85 million indicated or the amount requested by the applicant. OVW also has the discretion to negotiate the scope of work and budget with applicants before making an award or after an award is made but prior to access to funds. Applicants should also be realistic of how much funding will be needed to accomplish their proposed project. For example, if the applicant needs \$1.5 million based on the activities they are proposing, they should apply for that amount rather than increasing the amount to the full \$1.85 million cap.

Eligible applicants for this program are nonprofit nongovernmental entities or Tribal organizations in the United States or U.S. territories. Faith-based and community organizations, including culturally specific organizations, Tribal organizations, and population-specific organizations can also apply. Eligible applicants will be able to demonstrate their expertise in operating a national resource center and developing workplace responses to assist victims of domestic and sexual violence.

A letter of intent is not required, but highly recommended. The letter of intent is very brief. It just lets us know that you're planning on applying and should state that the organization is registered and current with SAM.gov and Grants.gov. We do have a sample on our website for you to follow. Applicants that do not submit a letter of intent are still eligible to apply and applicants that submit a letter are not obligated to move forward with the remainder of the application, if they end up changing their mind. It does help the TA unit a lot when you do submit a letter of intent so we can estimate how many applications we're receiving and also ensures that applicants are well-positioned to successfully submit their applications by the deadline. The letter of intent is due on Tuesday, November 26 to the TA email address – OVW.TechAssistance@usdoj.gov.

A few notes on formatting requirements for this application – applications should be double-spaced, 1-inch margins, Arial font no smaller than 11 point, and a maximum of 25 pages for the proposal narrative. Headings and subheadings should also be incorporated in the application and it should be corresponding to the specific sections identified in the solicitation. Keep in mind that applicants can lose points for failing to adhere to the formatting requirement, so just be careful to follow these.

Moving on to the application components, you can think of the application components in three categories: standard forms, scored documents, and additional data. The standard forms are submitted first in Grants.gov. As I mentioned earlier, that includes the SF-424 and the SF-LLL. The scored documents are submitted on JustGrants and that includes the project narrative, budget detail worksheet and narrative, letter of commitment, and letter of support. Applications that do not include all four documents will be deemed incomplete and not considered for funding. Each applicant will also be required to complete three unscored surveys in JustGrants as part of their application, and that includes the pre-award risk assessment, applicant entity questionnaire, and summary data sheet for the standard forms. The SF-424 is the application for federal assistance, and the SF-LLL is the disclosure of lobbying activities, and these are generated within Grants.gov. These forms cover basic information about your organization, entity type, amount of funding you are applying for, and information about your organization's lobbying activities. A couple things to note are that estimated funding amount that you list in the SF-424 has to match the budget you submit in JustGrants. Also, TA does not use match funds.

Applicants are required to submit a brief abstract of the project in the JustGrants system. So, you'll see a text box where you can submit a short abstract. This not scored but is reviewed throughout the application review process. Please only submit the abstract in the textbox. You do not need to upload a separate attachment. Applicants are highly encouraged to follow the template in the solicitation on how to write the abstract, and please do not just summarize past accomplishments. It's more of what you're planning to propose as part of the proposed project. In the next couple of slides, we are going to focus on aspects of your application that relate to the documents that our financial team reviews. I will pass this along to my colleague, Alonda Thomas, to cover this section.

ALONDA THOMAS: Thanks, Asma. In the next couple of slides, we are going to focus on aspects of your application that relate to documents that our financial team, the Grants Financial Management Division, GFMD, reviews. More specifically, we will discuss items that GFMD has identified from prior years' applications that could help with expediting our review process. So for today, we're going to highlight certain aspects of the pre-award risk assessment and provide you with a link to a detailed webinar on how to develop the budget that will be included in your application.

First, we'll highlight the items identified in the data summary data sheet which is completed by all applicants. Specifically, two items that we would like to discuss are the single audit response and the IRS three-step safe harbor procedure. OVW requests that all applicants provide a statement as to whether they have expended \$750,000 or more in federal funds during their last fiscal year. If they have, then they indicate that and also specify the end date of their last fiscal year. However, GFMD is finding that applicants do not always include all of this information. Please ensure that this question is answered in its entirety on the summary data sheet, question number 3. Another item that we'd like to highlight from the solicitation is specifically for nonprofit organizations. If you use the IRS three-step safe harbor procedure to determine your executives' compensation, you are required to provide a disclosure letter.

Please refer to the solicitation for further details, and a link to a sample letter. Note that there are four required parts of this disclosure letter. The sample letter provided outlines all four parts of the disclosure, so please be sure to follow the sample and provide a response to each of the four pieces.

The next item that we like to discuss is the pre-award risk assessment question, which assists GFMD during their pre-award risk assessment review for all applications. Each applicant must prepare a response to all 11 questions and each question had multiple parts. We've noticed from prior years that applicants do not always fully answer all parts of the question which in turn requires GFMD to reach out to the applicant, and which may delay funding decisions. Some of the most common issues that we've encountered have been, for example, question number 2, where the applicant indicates that they do indeed have internal policy, but they don't provide a brief list of topics covered in the policy and procedures. On question number 3, some applicants fail to provide a brief summary of the organization's process for tracking expenditures and more specifically, whether or not it tracks budgeted versus actual expenditures. These are just a few examples, but in general, please make sure that you read each piece of each question and provide a full and comprehensive response.

This slide quickly highlights some resources that are available as you are creating the budget to be submitted with your application. Over the last couple of years GFMD has developed a detailed webinar presentation on how to develop a budget to be submitted with the OVW application. This presentation addresses some of the challenges that you may face with your budget and provide some insight on OVW's budget review process. This webinar can be found at the link on this slide.

Next up is the uniform guidance which can be found at 2 Cfr. 200. Use your favorite search engine for this one. Other resources include the DOJ Financial Guide and the solicitation itself. Again, we know that this can be a lot of information to process. So, if you have any questions about the GFMD information discussed, please feel free to contact the GFMD Helpdesk a 1-888-514-8556 or by email at ovw.gfmd@usdoj.gov. I would recommend emailing, you would get a faster response because we have associates on hand that can help you and provide a wealth of knowledge and answers to your questions.

ASMA NORAY: Thank you so much, Alonda, and I just want to say again that our GFMD team is very knowledgeable, very helpful and responsive. So please don't hesitate to reach out to them. If you have questions on any of the components she discussed today.

I will now move on to discussing more details about the scored components of the application, and I'll start by going over the project narrative, which includes the purpose of the proposal section worth 20 points, the what will be done section worth 30 points, and who will implement the project which is worth 15 points. The solicitation lists in more detail which criteria and application should respond to for each section. So please make sure to address all of those criteria, because they correspond directly to how the reviewers will be scoring your application. For the what will be done section, you must provide a clear link between the proposed activities and the need you've identified in the purpose of the proposal section. One question that we receive pretty frequently is, what types of TA delivery methods should an applicant propose for this project? The delivery methods really depend on which goals and objectives you've proposed within the application. And, as stated in the criteria in the what will be done section, applicants should clearly explain why they're choosing a particular training or technical assistance delivery method, why it's appropriate for the target audience, and also the applicants experience with that specific delivery method. I also want to draw your attention to the criteria regarding accessibility. All training and technical assistance provided must be responsive to individuals

with disabilities, individuals that are hard of hearing, or Deaf or limited English proficient. Applicants must also submit a project, timeline as part of the what will be done section. The timeline should be included in the body of the project narrative, and should not be a separate attachment. If the timeline is attached as a separate document, it would count towards the page limit for the project narrative, which again, is maximum of 25 pages, and if your narrative is already at that maximum, the timeline would not be reviewed.

Please do not include attachments that are not required for the application, and also refrain from including any photos or images in the project narrative. If you have any charts, they can be single spaced, but you still have to follow the font and spacing requirements outlined in the formatting section.

Moving on to the budget, which is worth 15 points. Keep in mind that we're not using the JustGrants web-based budget this year. So you will submit your budget, detail worksheet and narrative as separate attachments in JustGrants. Make sure that you've carefully considered the resources that you need to implement your proposed project and activities. If you don't need the full budget cap that we've outlined, do not apply for the full cap, and vice versa. Make sure that you are proposing enough funding for the activities that you're proposing. OVW does have the discretion again to make awards for greater or lesser amounts than requested, and also to negotiate the scope of work with you later on. The cost of the budget should correlate directly with what is being proposed in the project narrative, and there should be a clear link between those two sections. For example, if the budget includes an in-person training, we should also see that in-person training described in detail in your project narrative section. For staffing, if you listed a position in the budget, you should be discussing that position also in the project narrative. The first time we see a position or an individual mentioned should not be in the budget. Also, accessibility considerations that I mentioned earlier should be incorporated into the budget, for example, expenses for translation of materials, interpreters, captioning, etc., should be included, and be reasonable to what's being proposed in the what will be done section.

MARNIE SHIELS: Hey, Asma, I'm sorry to interrupt, but there is a question and so I wanted to pose you the question. The person says, I see that photos or other images are not permitted in the narrative. Can the title page include a graphic and also our visuals, like flowcharts, considered an image or not?

ASMA NORAY: I would not recommend having any photos in the cover page, either. Neelam, do you have any guidance on flowcharts?

NEELAM PATEL: Yes, hi, everyone, Neelam Patel, team lead for training, technical assistance. Just what Asma said. You don't want to. Your cover page is not count as a page, but just keep in mind, we don't require it. It's a photo. Flowcharts are allowable as charts are allowable in your narrative. However, we ask for them to be minimal, and to also not just solely be about the flowchart. We are asking for the details for each of the criteria to be spelled forth and listed in the narrative. But you can include flowcharts as well, or a chart, if necessary.

ASMA NORAY: Thank you. Couple of other points on the budget, for in-person meetings. If you're proposing those, please review the conference, planning and expenditure, limits, sections, and the solicitation, and make sure your budget follows those guidelines. One key point I wanted to point out is that there are restrictions on food and beverage costs for in-person events and you'll see several other guidelines on conference planning. So please be make sure to refer to those. And lastly, the resource

center does require applicants to budget for the hiring of a new staff member, and this person would be required to dedicate at least 75% of their effort to the implementation of the pathways to opportunity pilot program.

Some unallowable costs for this program are lobbying, fundraising, any purchase of real property, physical modifications to buildings, including minor renovations that would include things like painting or carpeting, construction, and also subawards to pilot sites. Research projects, direct victim services, and surveys are also out of scope for this program. The only exception is that 2% of your funds can be allocated to conduct an assessment for internal improvement of purposes only so assessments that review how well your trainings are going, things like that.

Some additional program requirements to keep in mind as you're crafting your project narrative and budget are all applicants need to include funds to attend OVW-sponsored training and meetings throughout the project period. This funding allocation is required for all applicants, even if you're based in the D.C. area. Recipients are also required to collect and report on performance indicators to show their progress throughout the project. All the forms, instructions, trainings, and related tools for these performance indicators are available on the OVW website on the VAWA measuring effectiveness initiative webpage. There are guidelines specific to each OVW program. Recipients are also required to participate in any assessment or evaluation that OVW may conduct during the project period. And since this is a new component, I also wanted to highlight again the requirement to hire a project coordinator for the Pathways to Opportunity pilot project. Lastly, recipients must include a planning period with their OVW program specialists and any project partners that they're collaborating with.

The next scored component of the application is the letter of commitment, which is worth 15 points. The letter should identify partners and provide a brief history of their collaborative relationship. It should describe the roles and responsibilities each partner will assume and state that each project partner has reviewed the budget. The letter of commitment should also describe the resources and expertise each partner would contribute to the project and specify the extent of their participation in developing the application.

Please also identify all key personnel within the letter of commitment and include signatures from all partners. If you have multiple signature pages, make sure that all names of signatories are typed on each page. And the letter of commitment should be a single document with all partners. Please do not submit separate letter of commitments. Additional letters of commitment that are submitted will not be scored. And there's a typo on this slide, where it says MOU, it should say letter of commitment.

Worth 5 points, the letter should be written by the organization. They should identify the purpose of the training or technical assistance they received from the applicant and include the date that that technical assistance was provided. The letter of support should discuss the extent to which the trainer to enhancing the organization.

Workplace responses to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sexual harassment.

Only one letter of support is required. Keep in mind that you won't get extra points for additional letters. Some additional application components that are not scored but embedded within the JustGrants application process are the non-supplanting letter, confidentiality notice form, and the

summary of other federal funding. The summary of other federal funding would include current and recent OVW awards, as well as any other federal grants you have received or submitted applications for to do similar work. And samples of these charts are available on the OVW website. As a reminder, sam.gov registration to receive a UEI can take an average of two to three weeks and grants.gov registration can take an average of one week, so it's really important to start in advance, well in advance of the application deadlines. The JustGrants registration needs to be completed only after submission of the grants.gov components, which include the application of federal assistance and the disclosure of lobbying activities. If you encounter any difficulties with SAM, grants.gov or JustGrants, the email addresses for tech support for all three systems are listed at the end of this presentation. There are very limited circumstances where you can request late submission of your application due to inclement weather or technical difficulties. Please read the section of the solicitation that discusses this, to fully understand the circumstances where you can request this and the very specific steps you would need to follow, to request late submission. Any applicant requesting a late submission must follow the instructions in the solicitation and that includes requests due to severe weather, natural disaster, or technical difficulties beyond the applicant's reasonable control. Missing the grants.gov deadline, or JustGrants deadline is not considered a technical issue that qualifies for late submission. Failure to begin the registration and the application, submission and submission, insufficient time, or having the not having the correct version of Adobe is also not an acceptable reason for late submission. We have seen this many times where applicants are not able to submit their application because they don't have the correct version of Adobe and unfortunately waited until it was too late to be able to access that.

The next two slides are reminders on how to address technical issues. And there are more details on this in the solicitation as well. Some key points to keep in mind, you must have documentation of any issues with grants.gov your SAM registration or JustGrants, and you should contact the OVW technical assistance email address as soon as you're aware of those issues and provide us with the documentation of the issue, and also your efforts to resolve them by contacting the relevant helpdesks. Once the grants.gov deadline passes an applicant that has not completed their submission will not be able to submit in JustGrants. This slide discusses technical issues for JustGrants. Again, the most important thing to remember is please maintain any documentation of issues and communications with the OVW JustGrants helpdesk and follow the instructions listed in the solicitation if you encounter technical issues. Communication to resolve issues should start well in advance of the deadline to show that you didn't wait until the last minute. And please note that it's not guaranteed that applications submitted via email due to technical issues will be accepted for funding. To make sure you complete the steps required in grants.gov and that your application is successfully submitted in JustGrants, it's recommended that all applicants begin the submission process 48 hours prior to each deadline, and at least than 24 hours from the deadline for each step. Please do not submit test applications to see if grants.gov or JustGrants are actually working. All applications submitted, even if they're incomplete, are considered an application submission, and will be reviewed accordingly and also please avoid submitting one application multiple times. The most recently submitted application is the one that would be reviewed.

Some other reminders for JustGrants. When you're submitting your application. You'll be entering specific components directly into JustGrants like the abstract or you'll be required to upload the attachments to JustGrants. For example, the budget detail and worksheet. When submitting your application in JustGrants, you can save your progress in the system and revise the application as needed

prior to hitting the submit button. Don't hit the submit button until you're done with your application and ready to submit the full application. The application submitter, entity, administrator, and authorized representatives will receive an email from JustGrants confirming submission. Please make sure that these individuals whose emails are connected with the application are regularly checking their email for the confirmation of submission. OVW will not provide confirmation that applications were received. In the past, unfortunately, we've had situations where executive directors assign their responsibility for uploading to an assistant who is not checking their emails after they submit and then they realize too late that the deadline has passed and that the application didn't go through. And also we've seen executive directors upload the application themselves, leave for travel or other duties and then fail to check their email to confirm that the application went through correctly. So just note that everyone whose email is attached to the application has a responsibility to maintain communication and ensure that they receive application, that they receive confirmation that the application was submitted correctly. And one last reminder OVW can see in JustGrants when an applicant started to upload their application. We've had applicants in the past state that they had technical issues. But we can see that they started the process, for example, an hour or even less, before the deadline, and they ended up running out of time rather than actually having technical issues.

Some final reminders – please read the solicitation thoroughly, thoroughly. Again. This webinar was just an overview and we recommend that you clearly and carefully read each component of the solicitation, so that you're aware of all the requirements. Double-check all your attachments before uploading, and label them accordingly in JustGrants. Do not submit multiple versions of the same application and please start uploading at least 48 hours from the due date and time. Going over the deadlines one more time. There are multiple steps to the application process and we've provided the suggested deadline for SAM and grants.gov to help with this process. So the SAM and grants.gov registration is deadline is Tuesday, November 19. The grants.gov. deadline is Tuesday, December 10 and the JustGrants deadline is Thursday, December 12, and again and again, the optional but highly recommended letter of intent is due. Tuesday, November 26. Feel free to contact OVW at any point if you're having difficulties or if you have questions. There is a helpdesk associated with each of the different systems you'll be using to submit the application so you can contact the helpdesk at grants.gov or JustGrants for technical issues, for programmatic questions, please contact OVW.TechAssistance.@usdoj.gov, and then for financial questions, please contact GFMD directly at OVW.GFMD@usdoj.gov.

And we've now made it to the Q&A section of the presentation. Please feel free to submit your question in the chat box, and we'll be happy to address it. And Mello or Marnie, if you could read any questions for me, that would be very helpful.

MARNIE SHIELS: Yes, will do. As of this moment, there are not any open questions, so folks please, if you have any other questions, you can type them in the Q&A now and then, otherwise, there's that TA email address that you can send additional questions to if you think of some later. There's a question now in the chat. Will there be a copy of the recording sent? We will post it on our website, I believe?

ASMA NORAY: Yes, our contracting team will be editing the presentation and script and posting those on our website.

MARNIE SHIELS: Still no questions in the Q&A.

ASMA NORAY: We just stay on a few more minutes, and then log off.

MARNIE SHIELS: There is a question. Now I wanted to double check that my read of the solicitation is correct in that the new pathways to economic opportunity entails connections to victim service providers and workforce development programs that already run such programs. There will be no additional funding for new programs to start, is that correct.

ASMA NORAY: Marnie, did you wanna answer that.

MARNIE SHIELS: Yes, I am happy to do so. Give me a second. I'm finding that page of the statute. So, you're exactly right. The idea is building collaborations to better serve victims, basically. So, it's not for developing new things. It's about developing collaborations, but not new programs. Still, no questions.

ASMA NORAY: I'll wait till 1:55 to just see if there's more.

MARNIE SHIELS: Sounds good. Yeah.

ASMA NORAY: All right, I think we're good. Thank you so much, everyone for joining. And thank you to my co-facilitators, Alanda and Marnie, to our Leidos contracting team, and also thank you to our ASL interpreters and tech support. And please feel free to reach out to us again at any point. If you have questions as you're developing your application, and we look forward to reading your applications. Thank you.