

OVW Fiscal Year 2025 Electronic Service Protection Order Court Pilot (ESPOC) Call for Concept Papers Pre-Submission Information Session Transcript

ED SEIGHMAN: OK, great. Well, thank you. I think we can get started. Good afternoon and thank you for joining us. This information session is for the Fiscal Year 2025 call for concept papers notice of funding opportunity that was posted on October 8th . My name is Ed Seighman, Grants Management Specialist with the Office on Violence Against Women, or OVW, and my colleague Hannah Puffer and Interim Associate Director Julie Aldrich are also joining us. Before we begin to review the call for concept papers and application process, I have added the link to the funding opportunity, and we recommend you follow along the solicitation as we go through today's webinar. Also, I wanted to point out that a URL was added to the chat for those who want to follow along using Spanish captioning service.

Application submissions are due by 8:59 p.m. Eastern Time on December 5th, 2024, and will need to be submitted by email to OVW.ElectronicService@usdoj.gov. We recommend that everyone thoroughly read the call for concept papers before applying. At the end of the presentation, we will open it up to questions, however, please enter questions into the chat as they come up.

The Electronic Service Protection Order Court Pilot Program, or ESPOC, was authorized in the Violence Against Women Act of 2022. The program supports efforts to develop and implement programs for properly and legally serving protection orders through electronic communication methods. This program is intended to modernize the service process, make the process more effective and efficient, provide for improved safety for victims, and to make protection orders enforceable as quickly as possible. Eligible applicants are limited to state or tribal courts that are a part of a multidisciplinary partnership. We'll discuss the required partners shortly. Please note that the term "state" when referring to state courts, is inclusive of the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands. The length of this award is five years, which includes a planning period of up to 24 months.

At the time of application, the applicant that is the state or Tribal court is required to include the following partnerships in the statement of expertise with all of the following: 1) a state, Tribal, or local law enforcement agency; 2) a victim service provider or state or Tribal domestic violence coalition; 3) at least one state or Tribal court judge with expertise in domestic violence and issuing protective orders; 4) a department which has at least two individuals and is responsible for purchasing, , designing, and/or court case management technology and integration infrastructure. These partnerships must be demonstrated through Letters of Commitment, which will be required for selected recipients, and we will discuss those in more detail later in the presentation.

In the first year of the award, grantees will be required to make substantial efforts to, when possible, develop additional partnerships. These are in addition to the four Letter of Commitment partnerships discussed on the previous slide. Additional partners may include 1) a state, Tribal, or local prosecutor's office; 2) a provider of culturally specific services; 3) a nonprofit or government agency with experience providing legal assistance or legal advice to

victims of domestic violence and sexual assault; 4) a bar association of the applicable state or Tribe; 5) the state or Tribal association of court clerks; 6) a state, Tribal, or local association of criminal defense attorneys; 7) a judge assigned to the criminal docket of the state or Tribal court; and 8) an additional state or Tribal court judge with expertise in domestic violence and issuing protective orders.

The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) has identified four priority areas that the office will be addressing during FY2025. The Electronic Service Protection Order Court Pilot program will only be addressing one of these priority areas: Advance Equity and Tribal Sovereignty. Tribal courts and courts that primarily serve a culturally specific and underserved population are encouraged to apply under this solicitation.

As we discussed, this program supports efforts to develop and implement programs for properly and legally serving protection orders through electronic communication methods. The specific activities that will be funded include developing and implementing a program to serve protection orders through electronic means in order to 1) modernize the service process and make the process more effective and efficient, 2) provide improved safety for victims, and 3) make protection orders enforceable as quickly as possible.

Additionally, funds should be used to develop best practices related to electronic service of protection orders, ensure that the program complies with due process requirements and other required procedures, and implement any technology needed to carry out the program.

As a part of this pilot project, grantees will be required to engage in various collaborative activities. This includes working closely with OVW-sponsored TA providers for a planning period of up to 24 months, meeting regularly with multidisciplinary partnership members to discuss the project, making substantial efforts to expand partnerships, submitting semi-annual performance reports, and attending New Grantee Orientation. Recipients will also be required to collaborate with TA providers to develop two additional reports. The first report will be submitted within the first two years of the award and should detail the grantee's implementation plan. The second report will be submitted after the first two years. This report should include reflections on the overall project and document the viability, cost, service statistics, challenges, analysis of the technology used, analysis of any legal or due process issues resulting from electronic service, and best practices for implementing a program in similar communities.

The call for concept papers lists specific activities that are outside the scope of ESPOC and will not be supported by the program's funding. These activities include research projects, direct victim assistance, the development of a program for electronic service of order other than orders of protection, the development or improvement of a process to serve orders of protection that is not relevant to electronic service, and activities solely related to compliance, monitoring, and the enforcement of protection orders that are not served electronically. Concept papers that propose activities that are deemed to be substantially out of scope may receive a deduction in points during the review process or may be eliminated from consideration entirely.

The grant award period is 60 months. Budgets must reflect 60 months of project activity, and the total requested funding must reflect 60 months. Awards under this program will be made for up to one and a half million dollars. The estimated budget will be included in the

Summary Data Sheet, if selected then a more detailed budget will be required. An estimated budget should include funds for a project coordinator who will have time to dedicate organizing this proposed project.

As a reminder, the only eligible applicants for ESPOC are state or Tribal courts. Additionally, selected recipients will need to demonstrate that they are part of a multidisciplinary partnership with the four required partners. And as we discussed, those required partners are law enforcement, a victim service provider, a judge with expertise in domestic violence and issuing protective orders, and the department responsible for court case management technology.

Pursuant to statute, funding may be awarded to a diverse group of applicants when possible. This includes: A state court that serves a population of at least 1 million individuals. A state court that serves a state that is among the seven states with the lowest population density. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, these states are Alaska, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, New Mexico, and Idaho. A state court that serves a state that is among the seven states with the highest population density. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, these states are the District of Columbia, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Puerto Rico, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Maryland. A court that uses an integrated statewide case management system. A court that uses a standalone case management system. A Tribal court. A court that primarily serves a culturally specific and underserved population. These factors will be taken into consideration during the concept paper review process.

Now at this point, my colleague Hannah Puffer is going to present the information on the next set of slides.

HANNAH PUFFER: All right. Thank you so much, Ed. So, for the Electronic Service Program, applicants will be required to submit multiple items as a part of the concept paper. The Summary Data Sheet, which has a two-page limit, should respond to the prompts outlined in the call for concept papers. The Summary Data Sheet should include: the Lead Applicant; the project title, ; the point of contact for lead application, including the name, title, address, daytime phone number, and email address; the point of contact for required partner organizations, which includes the name, title, organization name, daytime phone number, and email address; and the estimated budget amount, which is up to one million, five hundred thousand dollars for a period of 60 months. The estimated budget should include rough estimates for the following categories: personnel, fringe benefits, contracts or consultants, supplies, equipment, and travel. Next slide, please.

Regarding the development of budget estimates, applicants should consider accessibility for language access, individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing, and individuals with disabilities; staff involved on this project, including costs to support a designated full-time project coordinator; a two-year planning period; regular meetings of the multidisciplinary partnership during the planning period to discuss the design and implementation of the project; technology or software. Please note that a detailed budget breakdown is not needed at this time. Next slide, please.

In regards to the Proposal Narrative, it cannot exceed 10 double-spaced pages and must provide a basic description of: the service area of the court's jurisdiction, including the size, the population density, and demographics in the jurisdiction; the communities in the service

area, including but not limited to traditionally underserved populations, such as communities of color, people with disabilities, people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, persons with limited English proficiency, older adults, and LGBTQ+ communities. If applicant is a Tribal court or a court that primarily serves a historically marginalized or underserved population, describe the challenges or needs of the identified population that the court primarily serves.

The Proposal Narrative must also include a basic description of the following: the process currently used for service of protection orders in the applicant's jurisdiction and challenges with such service. Include relevant statistics, if available, to support the challenges and/or needs identified; the rate of successful service of protection orders. If not available, describe the challenges with tracking the status and confirmation of service of protection orders. The rates of protection order enforcement in the court's service area for the past three calendar years, and current efforts to address challenges related to the successful service of protection orders, and the court's current case management system and its existing gaps as it pertains to protection orders.

The submission must include a Statement of Expertise, which can be no longer than eight double-spaced pages, and must include a statement summarizing the qualifications of the applicant and required partners. The statement should identify the names of the applicant and required partner staff who will develop and implement the project. Please note that OVW may contact partner organizations during the course of the application review process.

The Statement of Expertise must address partnerships that are required with four types of partner entities. Remember, these are the following required partnerships. One, a state, Tribal, or local law enforcement agency. Two, a victim service provider or state or Tribal domestic violence coalition. Per statute, a victim service provider is a nonprofit, nongovernmental or Tribal organization, including a state or Tribal domestic violence coalition, that assists or advocates for domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking victims, including a domestic violence shelter, faith-based organization or other organization, with a documented history of effective work concerning domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Victim service providers must provide direct services to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking as one of their primary purposes and have a demonstrated history of effective work in this field.

The required partnerships must also – I'm sorry – the statement of expertise must also include information about partnerships with a at least one state or Tribal court judge with expertise in domestic violence and issuing protective orders; and the department or departments responsible for purchasing, designing, and/or court case management technology and integration infrastructure. This department may be within the court or other government agency.

In regard to the selection criteria and decision-making process, concept paper proposals will be assessed based on the degree to which the application responds to each element in the Proposal Narrative and Statement of Expertise and the quality of the response. Concept Papers will be reviewed by panels that will consist of DOJ staff and/or subject matter experts. OVW may elect to conduct virtual or in-person meetings with applicants as part of the review process. OVW may request the participation of proposed project partners in these meetings. Selected recipients will be contacted by OVW via email and will be invited to submit a full

“non-competitive” application via the Grants.Gov and JustGrants systems. The application must reflect the activities and full budget discussed during the decision-making process. In addition to the project narrative, the budget detail, and the budget narrative, applicants will be required to submit signed Letters of Commitment with each of the required project partners listed in the Statement of Expertise section. Awards under this program for FY 2025 will be made for up to one million, five hundred thousand dollars for a 60-month project period. OVW estimates that it will make up to four awards for an estimated \$6 million total.

Regarding submitting the Concept Papers, they must be submitted in PDF or Word format via email to OVW.ElectronicService@usdoj.gov by December 5th, 2024, at 8:59 p.m. Eastern Time.

OVW will send receipt of confirmation emails within 72 hours of the due date. All

required materials for the call for concept paper, which includes the Summary Data Sheet, Proposal Narrative, and Statement of Expertise, must be submitted together in one email. If you encounter technical issues in submitting an application via email, please email OVW.ElectronicService@usdoj.gov no later than within 72 hours of the due date.

Those are all the slides that we have today. We can now open it up to questions, if you have any questions. I will also put the email for the Electronic Service Program in the chat, so if you think of any questions later on, you can certainly reach out to us.

JULIE ALDRICH: And while you may not have questions now, as stated throughout the presentation., this is a pilot project and has a lot of technical assistance support. Even if your jurisdiction doesn't have a plan or really thought through electronic service and the scope of it, that is what the planning period is for. So, it does come with a lot of support, so if it is something that has been of interest in the community, in your jurisdiction, that is exactly what this project is to help support, planning and then implementation of the electronic serviced in a variety of circumstances. We have one question: If we are substantially below the 1 million population limit, would it be beneficial to apply? Absolutely. Those are categories that were specified in the statute; however, we welcome all applications. So, do not get too hung up on those specificities. Please apply. We have another question. States have different civil practice statutes for service orders, so if your state typically uses in-person service and you might need some legislative amendments to change, can you still apply, particularly if there is tremendous interest? Absolutely. While the funding cannot be used for legislative purposes, if that is something that is happening on the side or continuously in parallel, then yes, you should absolutely apply. We understand that there are different statutes out there and maybe this will have to be under a pilot program with a judicial ruling to allow the pilot program if there are statutes that are limiting. Absolutely apply even if there are barriers that you already see. We have another question. If we have an existing electronic service platform for bench warrants and want to add protective orders, would this grant cover an expansion to an existing system? Absolutely. It is a different program, right, it is different than a bench warrant, so thinking through the feasibility and limitations, the how, even using an existing system is absolutely what this grant can support as it may require that existing system to have add-ons and improvements as well.

And we have another question: Who to we contact for assistance with the application? Hannah did put the OVW.ElectronicService email address so you can contact that for

additional assistance on the application and one of us or our colleague, Maureen Monagle, will respond to those emails, so we would be happy to provide assistance. Hannah just put it again. It's a concept paper, it doesn't have to be completely 100%, it's not a full application. I think that's something that we acknowledged that's needed in this area. It's an email application, so hopefully that takes some of the technological barriers off as well. We have another question. Similarly, is it possible to apply to create a portal that branches into a state-utilized system where filings are still done in paper format? I think it's absolutely possible, without knowing a little bit more, right? If you're using existing technology or branching onto other technology, absolutely apply because it could be taking a couple different paths, right? So absolutely it's appropriate to apply.

Another question: Some of us are more accustomed to the project abstract and budget narrative format, so is there any place where someone can see a summary data sheet form? Hannah and Ed, do you want to answer that? You guys covered that, I think.

ED SEIGHMAN: Yes. So, the call for concept papers includes the elements that have to be included in the summary data sheet. There isn't any particular format that we're requiring or that we proposed, but if you look at the call for concept papers you will see exactly what the elements are that have to be included. I think it's pretty straight forward.

JULIE ALDRICH: Yes, there's no projected abstract for this because it's a smaller lift and a smaller ask for the application for the call for concepts. The summary data sheet is right in the call for concept notification of funding opportunity and does not include a formal budget. I think that's probably the biggest difference that may not be a little unfamiliar. It's really just outlining a rough estimate but not a full-fledged budget at this point. We also have another question. Is this being recorded, and will the slides be emailed? Yes, this is being recorded, and we can share the recording and slides on our website, which we will do and to all registered participants as well.

Any other questions? We'll hang on for another 5 or so minutes, so if you don't have any questions and you want to drop off, feel free. Feel free to reach out the email that Hannah and Ed had mentioned as well. If you have specific questions to your jurisdiction and want to reach out through email, and we can answer those questions personally as well.

ED SEIGHMAN: OK, if we don't have any more questions, I think we will conclude the webinar now. As we mentioned earlier, it's been recorded and will be posted, so if you need to come back and look at what we discussed here it will be available for you to do that. Please feel free to reach out by email or by phone if you have any questions for us, and we are available to walk you through the call for concept papers and what is needed to get that submitted to us.

I'm going to stop sharing the slide deck and I think we stop recording now.