

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Welcome to the Pre-Application Conference session for the Fiscal Year 2018 Rural Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Program. The Office on Violence Against Women is convening this pre-application information session to go over the details of the Solicitation for the “Rural Program” for the FY 2018 funding cycle, and to respond to questions regarding the application process. OVW’s Rural Unit staff will be facilitating this session. I’m Charlotte Turpin, Program Manager for the Rural Unit and with me is Traci Rollins-Johnson, Program Assistant for the Rural Unit.

We will begin with a walk-through of the Solicitation and will highlight the requirements. At the end of the Solicitation overview, we will address frequently asked questions submitted by current and former Rural program applicants.

This session is meant to serve as a source of information regarding the Rural Application. Today we will cover highlights of the solicitation, it is not the intent nor is there sufficient time to go over every aspect of the solicitation. All applicants are responsible for reviewing the contents of all application materials. OVW staff cannot provide any feedback to applicants about the quality of a specific concept or proposal, or provide any information outside of that presented in the solicitation that would give any advantage or even the appearance of an advantage to an applicant. We will be available throughout the open solicitation period to address any questions about the application requirements. Please feel free to contact the Rural Unit at ovw.rural@usdoj.gov any time during the application process with questions.

If you have your solicitation in front of you, today’s call will generally follow the order of topics as listed within the solicitation.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is mentioned on the cover of the solicitation, as well as beginning on page 8. Eligible applicants are limited to states, Indian tribes, territories, local governments and nonprofit (public or private) entities, including Tribal nonprofit organizations.

ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Eligible Service Area Documentation (pg. 9)

The Rural Statute within the Violence Against Women Act requires that rural funds are directed to victims residing within areas that are “rural eligible”. To demonstrate that the areas that your agency is proposing targeting services to are rural-eligible, you must follow the instructions found within Appendix G of the Application Solicitation and upload the information as instructed.

The Rural Program does not require a map of your service area, only the documentation that the targeted service area is, in fact, “rural” and meets this eligibility requirement.

This is a requirement, and non-submission of the rural eligible service area documentation will prevent your application from being considered.

There is one exception to this rule. Federally Recognized Indian Tribes are automatically eligible for Rural Program funding and do not need to submit documentation for the proposed service area.

Delivery of Legal Assistance

In previous years, legal assistance was limited to “legal assistance in seeking protection orders and limited immigration matters”. With the implementation of VAWA 2013, legal services have been expanded to include comprehensive legal service such as divorce, custody, and child support.

Legal Certification

All applicants proposing to provide legal assistance with funds under the FY 18 Rural Program must certify in writing regarding their expertise and training. A sample letter can be found in Appendix F.

Any person providing legal assistance with funds through this program

- A. has “demonstrated expertise in providing legal assistance to victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence or stalking in the targeted population, or
- B. is partnered with an entity or person that has demonstrated expertise as described in subparagraph A; and, has completed, or will complete, training in connection with domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking and related legal issues, including training on evidence-based risk factors for domestic and dating violence homicide.”

The requirement continues – and I’m summarizing – that applicants proposing to provide training with funds under the FY18 Rural Program must certify that the training program has been developed with input from and in collaboration with SA, DV, DV and S service providers and others;

Will inform and continue to inform SA, DV, DV and S programs and coalitions about their work; and finally,

The grantee’s organizational policies do not require mediation or counseling involving offenders and victims physically together, in cases where SA, DV, DV, or child sexual abuse is an issue.

The certification should be made in the form of a letter, on letterhead and signed and dated by the authorizing official.

There is a sample certification letter included within the solicitation (Appendix F).

Required Partnerships

All eligible applications must include a sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence or stalking victim service provider as the lead applicant and/or as a formal project partner as demonstrated through the required Memorandum of Understanding. A complete overview of the criteria used to determine “victim service provider” can be found in section C.

Additionally, eligible applications, including those submitted by a victim service provider, must include at least one project partner, and should include agencies and organizations necessary to implement the proposed project.

DEADLINES

Also on the cover of the solicitation you’ll note that applications are due by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on January 31, 2018;

Do not wait until the last minute to submit your application.

REGISTRATION

Also noted on the cover of the solicitation, applicants are strongly encouraged to “register” on or before January 11, 2018. If you haven’t already done so, please do so at your earliest convenience. Registration includes several steps – obtaining a DUNS number; ensuring that you registered within the SAM system and registering on Grants.Gov. We’ll go over each of these steps individually.

Every applicant must obtain a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) Number and register online with System for Award Management (SAM) well before the grant deadline. There is a reason that we set a deadline of January 11th, as the process to register for DUNS and SAM is extremely lengthy. If you do not have a DUNS number and or are not current in the SAM system, you should begin this process as soon as possible. (pages 22-23)

Register with Grants.gov as soon as possible if you haven’t already done so. The registration process is not one that can be completed quickly, it takes time – *days* – and you should begin this process as soon as possible. Every year we have a handful of applicants that didn’t make the deadline because they were delinquent with their SAM and/or Grants.Gov registrations.

If you are considering applying, a Letter of Registration should have been submitted to OVW by January 11th as well. The letters of registration are not mandatory; however, they are very helpful to us internally in attempting to identify the potential volume of applications that are expected to be received and to plan accordingly for the peer review process. If you haven’t submitted one yet, please do so – this will be very helpful to us in our planning process for peer review.

SECTION A – PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Page 1 of the solicitation provides an overview on the history and goals for the Rural Program. Victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking in rural communities face unique challenges and barriers to receiving assistance rarely encountered in urban areas. The geographic isolation, transportation barriers, economic structure, particularly strong social and cultural pressures, and lack of available services in rural jurisdictions significantly compound the problems confronted by those seeking support and services to end the violence in their lives. These factors also complicate the ability of the criminal justice system to investigate and prosecute sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking cases. In addition, socio-cultural, economic, and geographic barriers create difficulties for victim services providers to identify and assist victims of these crimes.

Program Scope

Purpose Areas - The FY 2018 Rural Program has 3 Purpose Areas. You'll find this information on page 2 of the solicitation. All projects funded through the Rural Program should fall under one or more of these Purpose Areas:

1. To identify, assess, and appropriately respond to child, youth, and adult victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking in rural communities, by encouraging collaboration among sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking victim service providers; law enforcement agencies; prosecutors; courts; other criminal justice service providers; human and community service providers; educational institutions; and health care providers, including sexual assault forensic examiners;
2. To establish and expand nonprofit, nongovernmental, state, tribal, territorial, and local government victim services in rural communities to child, youth, and adult victims; and/or
3. To increase the safety and well-being of women and children in rural communities by:
 - A. dealing directly and immediately with sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking occurring in rural communities; and
 - B. creating and implementing strategies to increase awareness and prevent sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and/or stalking.

Purpose Area #3 has two components – one is “dealing directly and immediately” with violence against women crimes and the other refers to increasing awareness and prevention efforts. For many applicants, the Rural Program is one of the few sources of funding to support the provision of core services for victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. **For this reason, OVW will only fund applications that propose projects that implement a collaborative response, support victim services and/or create a direct response to these crimes in rural communities. Proposed projects must devote at least 70% of their project activities and budget to Rural Program purpose areas 1, 2 and/or 3(A). Applicants may apply to address purpose area 3(B), but no more than 30% of the project budget and activities may be dedicated to prevention and awareness activities.** (That being said, footnote #1 also states that OVW may approve project budgets that allocate a higher than 30% for prevention and awareness activities where strong justification is provided by the applicant.)

Strategies

In addition to these purpose areas, Rural Program grantees must implement one or more strategies as outlined in the authorizing statute. This information may be found beginning at the bottom of page 2 and continuing on page 3. In summary the five strategies are:

1. Implementing, expanding, and establishing cooperative efforts and projects among law enforcement officers, prosecutors, victim service providers, and other related parties to investigate and prosecute incidents of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, including developing multidisciplinary teams focusing on high risk cases with the goal of preventing domestic and dating violence homicides;
2. Providing treatment, counseling, advocacy, legal assistance, and other long-term and short-term victim and population specific services to adult and minor victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking in rural communities, including assistance in immigration matters;
3. Working in cooperation with the community to develop education and prevention strategies directed toward such issues;
4. Developing, enlarging, or strengthening programs addressing sexual assault, including sexual assault forensic examiner programs, Sexual Assault Response Teams, law enforcement training, and programs addressing rape kit backlogs; and
5. Developing programs and strategies that focus on the specific needs of victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking who reside in remote rural and geographically isolated areas, including addressing the challenges posed by the lack of access to shelters and victims services, and limited law enforcement resources and training, and providing training and resources to Community Health Aides involved in the delivery of Indian Health Service programs.

MANDATORY PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

By statute, at least 75% of the total amount of funding made available for this program must be allocated to eligible entities located in “rural” states. The term “rural” State means a State that has a population density of 57 or fewer persons per square mile or a State in which the largest county has fewer than 250,000 people, based on the most recent decennial census. The following states are designated as “rural” based upon the definition of “rural state” within the VAWA 2013 statute and the 2010 census: (Pg. 3-4)

Alaska

Arizona

Arkansas

Colorado

Idaho

Iowa

Kansas

Maine

Mississippi

Montana
Nebraska
Nevada
New Mexico
North Dakota
Oklahoma
Oregon
South Dakota
Utah
Vermont
West Virginia
Wyoming

And the five U.S. Territories: American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and Virgin Islands.

The states that are designated rural are also listed in footnote #1 at the bottom of page 3.

However, *regardless of whether an application is submitted by an entity from a rural state or a non-rural state*, all applicants must target services in a rural area or community. The statute defines the terms “rural area” and “rural community” as:

“(A) any area or community, respectively, no part of which is within an area designated as a standard metropolitan statistical area by the Office of Management and Budget;

(B) any area or community, respectively, that is--

(i) within an area designated as a metropolitan statistical area or considered as part of a metropolitan statistical area; and

(ii) located in a rural census tract; or

(C) any federally recognized Indian tribe.”

All applicants, whether from statutorily defined rural States¹ or non-rural States, must submit the eligibility and service area documentation as identified in Appendix G.

The VAWA also requires that no less than 25% of the funds appropriated for the Rural Program be allocated to activities that meaningfully address sexual assault in rural communities.

OVW Priority Areas

Information regarding priority areas begins on page 4 of the solicitation. Applications proposing activities in the following areas will be given special consideration during the review process:

1. Improve services for and/or the response to victims of sex trafficking and other severe forms of trafficking in persons who have also experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking.

OVW will give special consideration to applications that address services and/or responses to victims of sex trafficking or other forms of trafficking in persons who have also experienced sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Under the definitions and grant conditions applicable to the Rural Grant Program pursuant to VAWA, as amended, victim services and legal assistance includes services and assistance to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking who are also victims of severe forms of trafficking in persons.³⁴ U.S.C. § 12291 (b) (14) This means that applicants can apply to serve individuals who are both victims of trafficking and victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Applicants proposing to serve trafficking victims must specify this in their application and must demonstrate capacity to serve this population, either through their own expertise and experience or through partnerships with organizations and/or agencies that have such expertise and experience. Applicants must also partner with federal, state, and/or local law enforcement and prosecution to develop comprehensive response protocols to ensure that trafficking victims are identified and referred for appropriate services. Applicants must identify how they will engage in outreach to trafficked victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking and tailor services to address the unique needs of these victims. An example of an appropriate project under this priority area could be training judges, advocates, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and others who work with victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking to recognize when those victims may also be victims of sex trafficking or other severe forms of trafficking in persons. Another example might include incorporating education and awareness activities into a community coordinated response. OVW will determine whether the applicant's proposal to address trafficking merits special consideration under this priority area.

2. Increase support for sexual assault, including services, law enforcement response and prosecution.

OVW will give special consideration to applications that *meaningfully* address sexual assault such as supporting staff positions of adult or pediatric Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) and/or Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFEs) training for these professionals, and programs that serve child sexual abuse/assault victims. Applicants are also encouraged to consider other areas addressing sexual assault, such as counseling for sexual assault survivors; the establishment or enhancement of Sexual Assault Response Teams; specialized personnel or units such as law enforcement or prosecution; specialized training related to responding, investigating or prosecuting sexual assault cases; programs addressing rape kit backlogs; and programs that involve implementation of the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards in working with incarcerated victims.

Applications that focus primarily (75% or more of their proposed goals, objectives, activities and budget) on developing, enlarging, or strengthening programs addressing sexual assault in rural communities or areas will be considered to be meaningfully addressing this issue and given special consideration during the recommendation process.

3. Meaningfully increase access to OVW programming for specific marginalized and/or underserved populations (based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, etc.).

OVW recognizes the diversity within the population in rural America and the existing gaps among current Rural Program grantees in providing services that fully reflect the rural communities that they serve. Our experience is that many of our rural grantees who have a large African American population and/or elderly population within their community (ies) find that the demographics of those that they serve do not necessarily reflect the demographics of their community. Therefore, OVW encourages applicants to consider projects that would increase services to those underserved populations and ensure that services are representative of their community demographics. OVW will give special consideration to applicants that propose to increase support for underserved populations, such as African Americans, the elderly, and immigrants. OVW also encourages applicants to consider ways in which they will ensure that organizations and programs focus on incorporating representatives from marginalized communities in their respective coordinated community responses and/or on their multidisciplinary team.

Applications that focus primarily (75% or more of their proposed goals, objectives, activities and budget) on developing, enlarging, or strengthening programs addressing sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and/or stalking in African American, elderly or immigrant rural communities or areas will be considered to be meaningfully addressing the issue and given special consideration during the recommendation process.

Activities that Compromise Victim Safety and Recovery

You will find this information beginning on page 5 of the solicitation. We will be reviewing for scope, reasonableness, and safety issues. Although we are not going to spend a lot of time reviewing the “Activities that Compromise Victim Safety and Recovery”; “Out-of-Scope Activities”; and/or “Unallowable Activities”, we strongly recommend that you read through these sections carefully and contact us directly if you have any questions.

Out of Scope Activities

Activities that are determined to be out of the program scope can be found on page 6. Be sure to review the list. Applications 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.

Unallowable Activities

Applicants may not use any OVW funds to conduct research. However, up to three percent of the budget may be allocated for the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of funded activities.

Additionally, lobbying, fundraising, purchase of real property, physical modifications to buildings, including minor renovations (such as painting or carpeting) and construction are unallowable through the Rural Program. (page 7).

Applications that include substantial unallowable activities may not be considered for funding.

SECTION B – FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Award Period

The grant award period is for 36 months, beginning on October 1, 2018.

Award Amounts

- Funding levels for 2018 are as follows:
 - Continuation applications will be limited to \$750,000
 - New applications will be limited to \$500,000
- OVW has the discretion to award grants for greater or lesser amounts than requested and to negotiate the scope of work and budget with applicants prior to award of the grant.

Types of Applicants

Both new and continuation applications are being accepted. Grantees that received Rural funding in FY2016 or FY2017 are not eligible to apply.

SECTION C – ELIBILITY INFORMATION

Already discussed

SECTION D – APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Formatting and Technical Requirements:

Application Requirements

Applications must include the following required documents and demonstrate that the program eligibility requirements have been met: Project Narrative; Budget Detail Worksheet and Narrative; Memorandum of Understanding; and Eligible Service Area Documentation.

If an application packet does not include these four mandatory elements, the application will not be forwarded to peer review.

Summary Data Sheet

The Summary Data Sheet information (which starts on page 13 of the solicitation) is NOT included within the 20-page limit for the Project Narrative. The Summary Data Sheet may be single OR double spaced, and may be 1-4 pages in length. Please make sure that all required elements listed within this section are included. This is mandatory information.

Proposal Abstract

Abstracts are to be no more than 2 pages double-spaced;

Project Narrative

The Project Narrative is no more than 20 pages double-spaced. Narratives exceeding 20 pages will not be reviewed past page 20;

Budgets

Generally, food and beverage costs are not allowable, and under no circumstances may OVW funding be used to supply food and/or beverages during refreshment breaks;

If you are requesting OVW funds to provide food and/or beverages for a meal at a meeting, conference, training, or other event, you MUST meet one of the exceptions found in the Financial Management Guide which can be found at the link in the solicitation.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Please refer to information about a Memorandum of Understanding beginning on page 17 of the solicitation. The requirements are similar to previous years, but nevertheless, we strongly encourage you to carefully read the requirements for MOU's found in this section. We ask that the MOU is very specific and mirrors the narrative and budget. Information specific to required partnerships can be found in the Program Eligibility Requirements in Section C beginning on page 10.

FORMS

Confidentiality Notice Form

All applicants are required to acknowledge that they have received notice that grantees and subgrantees must comply with the confidentiality and privacy requirement of the Violence Against Women Act, as amended.

Other Forms

You will find other required forms and attachments to be similar to previous years. They include: SF-424, Standard Assurances, Financial Capability questionnaire, Disclosure of Process Related to Executive Compensation, Financial Accounting Practices, Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, Letter of Non-supplanting, Delivery of Legal Assistance Certification Letter (if applicable), and Rural Eligibility Documentation.

OVW Policy on Duplicate Applications

If an applicant submits multiple versions of an application, OVW will review the last version submitted before the deadline. (page 24)

OVW Policy on Late Submissions (Pg. 25)

In limited circumstances, OVW will approve a request to submit an application after the due date. The chart below provides a description of the circumstances under which OVW will consider such requests. OVW will only consider a late submission request if all steps outlined on page 25-27 have been followed. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with the late submission process. OVW's approval of a late submission request is not an indication of the application's final disposition. Applications approved for late submissions are still subject to all of the review processes and criteria described in this solicitation.

Failure to begin registration or application submission in sufficient time to acquire the correct version of Adobe software is not an acceptable reason for late submission. Applicants should register with SAM and Grants.gov by January 11, 2018.

Experiencing Unforeseeable Technical Issues (Pg.26)

Applicants who experience "Unforeseen Technical Issues". PLEASE read through the procedures now - as opposed to later –and familiarize yourself with the procedures in the event of a technical difficulty. You MUST follow the procedures as written to be considered for a late submission.

The same goes for the policy regarding "Extraordinary Natural or Manmade Disasters". We would hope that none of our applicants ever needs to exercise this policy, but it's there if needed.

Accommodations and Language Access

Please note the language, where applicants are encouraged to allocate grant funds to support activities that help ensure individuals with disabilities and deaf individuals and persons with limited English proficiency have meaningful and full access to their programs;

Grantees have a responsibility to ensure that all products such as websites, webinars, videos, and other materials are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Training and Technical Assistance (pg. 29)

Please note that the OVW Training and Technical Assistance allocation is \$10,000.

Applicants from AK, HI and US Territories should allocate \$15,000.

These are minimum amounts to be allocated for OVW-sponsored training and technical assistance by OVW TA providers, and does not mean you can't include more if you feel it necessary; but be aware that whatever is leftover in this line item at the end of your grant has to be returned to OVW.

Submitting a Grant Application (Pg. 30)

Important Grants.gov update. Grants.gov has updated its application tool. The legacy PDF application package is being phased out and was retired on December 31, 2017. Grants.gov Workspace is now the standard application method for applying for grants. Applicants should familiarize themselves with the Workspace option now. For complete information and instructions on using Workspace (and other changes), go to the Workspace Overview page at the link provided on pg. 30.

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>.

To ensure a successful application submission, OVW strongly encourages applicants to start their applications at least 48, but no less than 24, hours before the deadline.

The [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) Help Desk can be reached at 1-800-518-4726, Monday through Friday, from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. E.T. except federal holidays.

SECTION E – APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

All applications will be subject to a peer review and a programmatic review that is fair and based on the criteria outlined in this solicitation. Information regarding the review and selection process begins on page 31 of the solicitation.

The review consists of assessing for activities that compromise victim safety, Out-of-scope activities, past performance, formatting and technical requirements.

Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on January 31, 2018;

And, again, a reminder that:

Applicants must obtain a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) Number, register online with System for Award Management (SAM), and register with Grants.Gov as soon as possible.

If you haven't already done so, a Letter of registration should be submitted at your earliest convenience. They help us to monitor the number of applications to expect.

For assistance with requirements of this solicitation, contact the OVW main number at 202 307-6026 and ask for the Rural Unit.