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**Consultation Topic: A request for continued input on the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) proposal to streamline the application process for OVW's tribal-specific grant programs, as well as feedback on the COVID-19/Violence Against Women Assistance to Tribes Solicitation application process.**

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From June 30 to July 9, 2020, OVW hosted a series of four online webinars – two government-to-government consultations with tribal leaders and designated governmental representatives as well as two listening sessions with other tribal stakeholders – to solicit recommendations regarding OVW's proposal to create a streamlined application process for its tribal-specific grant programs, including administering OVW's Tribal Governments Program (i.e., Purpose Area 5) outside of DOJ's Coordinated Tribal Assistance Solicitation (CTAS). A majority of those who testified and submitted comments expressed their support for removing OVW's Tribal Governments Program (TGP) from CTAS, and suggested ways that OVW could simplify the application process for TGP and for OVW's other tribal-specific grant programs, which are already not part of CTAS.<sup>1</sup>

Based on the testimony and comments received, as well as its own experience administering tribal-specific programs, OVW has decided to solicit applications for the TGP outside of CTAS beginning in FY 2021 while continuing to consult and seek feedback on the application process for its tribal-specific programs. In addition, OVW issued a special solicitation on July 30, 2020 – titled the COVID-19/Violence Against Women Assistance to Tribes (Tribal COVID-19/VAW) solicitation – to respond to tribes' needs in responding to violence against women during the pandemic and to provide an example of a streamlined application structure that OVW could adapt for FY 2021. OVW is now requesting feedback from tribes regarding: (1) their experiences with applying to the Tribal COVID-19/VAW solicitation, and (2) any further recommendations for streamlining the application process for OVW's tribal-specific grant programs.

The Tribal COVID-19/VAW solicitation was funded with unobligated funds from two separate tribal-specific grant programs: the Tribal Governments Program (TGP) and the Tribal Sexual Assault Services Program (TSASP). The application process articulated in the Tribal COVID-19/VAW solicitation differed from standard OVW applications in several ways. First, OVW consolidated the application instructions for both TGP and TSASP into one combined solicitation. Second, applicants only had to submit a project narrative and a budget by the deadline for the application to move forward to peer review. This option was adopted so that only those applicants likely to be funded would have to submit the full set of documents that are required for award processing. Finally, the solicitation shortened and simplified the project narrative section of the application, with a simplified chart template for the "What will be done" section of the narrative.

OVW implemented these solicitation changes to expedite the disbursement of remaining FY 2020 funds to tribal communities that have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19

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<sup>1</sup> OVW's other tribal-specific programs are the Tribal Sexual Assault Services Program, Grants to Tribal Governments to Exercise Special Domestic Violence Criminal Jurisdiction, and the Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions Program.

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pandemic. OVW is considering adapting some of these changes for FY 2021 tribal program solicitations; however, before doing so, OVW is consulting further with tribal governments on these and other strategies for increasing tribes' access to OVW grant funds. Several tribal leaders and stakeholders who testified in June and July recommended that OVW continue to consult on this subject at the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Government-to-Government Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation. By way of this framing paper, OVW is carrying out this recommendation.

Accompanying this framing paper is a report of the testimony and recommendations received at the June/July sessions and OVW's responses to those recommendations. OVW received many excellent suggestions and plans to implement as many of the recommendations as possible. OVW is also eager to hear from tribes and tribal organizations on how the adjustments made in the Tribal COVID-19/VAW solicitation affected them. The set of specific consultation questions below are intended to help guide feedback from tribal leaders, but OVW welcomes testimony on any aspect of OVW's efforts to streamline the application process for OVW's tribal-specific programs and to increase tribal access to OVW funding.

## **QUESTIONS**

1. For those tribes that applied under the Tribal COVID-19/VAW solicitation, was the application easier to complete in comparison to applications for other OVW grants or other federal grants? Which parts of the solicitation or application process worked well or which did not work well? Is there any part of the prior process that you prefer?
2. OVW has already received some feedback from tribal applicants that combining two grant programs in the Tribal COVID-19/VAW solicitation was confusing and did not work well. Do tribal leaders also recommend against this approach?
3. Some tribal applicants found the chart for completing the "what will be done" section of the project narrative to be helpful, but others found it too limiting or confusing. The chart was optional but encouraged; the idea behind it was to make it easier to complete the project narrative without needing a professional grant writer to prepare the narrative. Would tribal leaders recommend continuing to give this option or making any adjustments to it? Are there other steps OVW could take to guide applicants through the application, particularly those that do not have a grant writer on staff?
4. At the June/July 2020 consultations and listening sessions, some testified that it is hard for new, smaller applicants to compete against experienced applicants. OVW is considering a short, easy application for new TGP applicants that would like to obtain a limited number of smaller awards to plan or begin to develop a project. Applying for a planning grant would not be mandatory for new applicants. New applicants could choose to apply for a planning grant or to immediately compete for a standard/larger award. Do tribes support this idea?
5. Do tribes have any additional ideas for streamlining the application process for OVW's tribal-specific grant programs or enhancing tribes' access to OVW funding, beyond those discussed here or raised in the accompanying report on the June/July consultations and listening sessions?