

# **Office on Violence Against Women Peer Review Guidelines**

**Revised July 2025**



U.S. Department of Justice

**OVW**

Office on Violence Against Women

Working Together to End the Violence

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## **Overview of the Office on Violence Against Women and Discretionary Grant Programs**

### **Purpose of the Guidelines**

The Office on Violence Against Women (“OVW”) has prepared this guidebook to provide a general understanding of our grant application review process and a detailed overview of peer review. The role of the peer reviewer is critical. Your expertise will impact communities across the country as they work to address domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. As a peer reviewer, you will have a role in assisting OVW in determining which communities and organizations have access to the limited grant dollars administered by OVW.

### **What is OVW Peer Review?**

Peer Review is the technical and programmatic evaluation of grant applications by a group of subject matter experts (SMEs) qualified in a particular area related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. As such, the Peer Review process provides an objective and independent review of applications. Every year OVW, through its Peer Review process, convenes panels comprised of experts in domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking, and other relevant practitioners, to evaluate grant applications based on the programmatic requirements and specifications outlined in the program NOFO.

SMEs are required to identify strengths and areas for improvement in applications and score them based on a set of criteria. Reviewers meet in panels to discuss their assigned applications. Peer Review recommendations are advisory in nature but are critical in assisting OVW in its funding decisions.

Peer Review offers the opportunity to provide a valuable public service in advising OVW on the strengths and areas of improvement of grant applications. OVW peer reviewers will receive monetary compensation in the amount of \$200 to read and score each application. In addition, the experience of serving on a peer review panel provides reviewers with nonmonetary benefits and the opportunity to gain professional experience by:

- ☐ Helping to shape federal programs and positively impact communities and organizations that are awarded grants.
- ☐ Networking and connecting with other professionals around the country.
- ☐ Helping communities and organizations around the country strengthen future applications to improve their chances of receiving funding.

### **Who is an OVW Peer Reviewer?**

The vast majority of OVW peer reviewers are active practitioners or recent retirees from relevant domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking professions. OVW does not use professional peer reviewers because it is our goal to have applications reviewed by individuals with current, on-the-ground experience and knowledge of both the challenges and best practices in addressing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Potential peer reviewers may include victim advocates, judges, prosecutors, law enforcement, legal assistance providers, providers from other community-based and faith-based organizations, and others with expertise on violence against women issues or other expertise relevant to a specific OVW grant program. OVW may also seek reviewers with substantive knowledge in working with Tribal communities, college and university communities, rural areas, urban areas, and those working with persons with disabilities or persons over 50 years of age.

OVW maintains a database of potential peer reviewers, which includes the reviewer's specific expertise relevant to each grant program. While the database is maintained by a contractor, the list of eligible peer reviewers is developed and expanded by OVW.

Individuals interested in becoming a peer reviewer should submit to OVW a completed [Peer Review Recruitment Form](#) and a copy of their résumé or curriculum vitae that reflects relevant experience in domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If a resume or curriculum vitae is the only document submitted, then ensure it includes your professional discipline and a list of Violence Against Women Act funded grant projects to which you are currently or have been a part in the past, if applicable. Interested parties can call OVW at (202) 307-6026 or send an email to [ovw.peerreview@usdoj.gov](mailto:ovw.peerreview@usdoj.gov) for more information.

Note: Individuals whose salary is 100% funded by an OVW grant program must take annual leave or unpaid leave to participate in OVW Peer Review.

## **An Overview of the Grant Application Review Process**

OVW conducts three stages of application review: 1. Basic Minimum Requirement Review (BMR); 2. Peer Review; and 3. Programmatic Review. This section will provide a brief overview of each.

An eligible entity is responsible for submitting a completed application in accordance with the requirements outlined in the program's NOFO. Generally, OVW will not contact applicants for missing or incomplete parts of applications prior to peer review unless otherwise stated in the NOFO. The timely submission of applications and their attachments is necessary for OVW to meet its award announcement deadlines.

Once submitted, all applications will be subject to BMR, a review process based on the criteria outlined in the program NOFO. OVW conducts BMR on **all** applications prior to peer review. The BMR process evaluates whether the applications received are complete and eligible to receive funding under the grant program. BMR is a short process and does not involve a substantive analysis of the application content. The BMR process helps OVW to determine whether the application should be forwarded to Peer Review.

A substantially complete application must include the mandatory attachments listed in the program NOFO, which usually include the following:

1. Project narrative;
2. Budget narrative,
3. Budget detail worksheet; and
4. Memorandum of Understanding or Letters of Support/ Letters of Commitment/ Letter of Experience.

A substantially incomplete application is a proposal that lacks one or more of the mandatory documents listed in the program's NOFO, e.g. a project narrative. Applications deemed incomplete will not be forwarded to Peer Review. Applications missing non-critical elements during BMR (e.g. abstract, letter of non-supplanting) will be forwarded to Peer Review, and the applicant will be allowed to submit those items later in the application process.

In addition, each program's NOFO identifies criteria that the applicant must meet to be considered eligible and complete. For example, some OVW administered grant programs have statutory certifications or statutory minimum requirements which must be met by applicants at the time of application submission. Incomplete applications or applications that do not meet the relevant certification or minimum requirements, as required by statute, will not be forwarded to Peer Review. An application that fails to meet the BMR requirements will not receive further consideration.

Applications that meet the basic minimum requirements are forwarded to peer review, which is discussed in more detail below.

After the peer review process is complete, OVW conducts programmatic review. During the programmatic review process, OVW reviews the highest-ranking applications to assess the following areas: 1) project scope; 2) office priority/program special interest areas; 3) activities that compromise victim safety; 4) unallowable and out of scope activities; 5) duplication of federal funding; 6) other program specific considerations; and 7) past performance for previously funded applicants.

## **Confidentiality Policy**

Peer reviewers, OVW staff, and the peer review contractor must maintain complete confidentiality of all application materials, reviewer identities, comments, deliberations, and recommendations discussed during the consensus meetings. OVW's peer review consensus meeting guidelines prohibit panelists from providing any information — before, during, and after the review — regarding their deliberations or recommendations to anyone outside their assigned peer review panel. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) to review applications is prohibited. Peer reviewers are not permitted to upload any part of an application into an AI platform or large language model such as ChatGPT, etc.

## Conflict of Interest Policy

In order to mitigate the number of conflicts of interest, OVW requires all potential peer reviewers to fill out the “Save the Date” notice indicating their availability and identifying any conflicts of interest by answering a few questions prior to being selected as a peer reviewer. **An OVW program will not allow an individual to serve as a peer reviewer who has a pending application with that specific grant program. This includes not just individuals who are employed by an applicant entity, but also consultants, subrecipients, contractors, memorandum of understanding partners, and anyone situated to gain financially from a submitted application for that fiscal year.** Additionally, potential reviewers will also need to disclose if there are any applicants for that grant program for which they might have a personal conflict (e.g., a family member or friend’s organization is applying). An individual with such a relationship is considered to have a conflict of interest and cannot serve as a peer reviewer for the grant program under which they have a pending application. **If you become aware of a potential conflict of interest during the peer review process, you must notify the OVW Peer Review Point of Contact immediately.**

In rare instances in which OVW requires select expertise to effectively evaluate a grant application, the OVW Peer Review Point of Contact may seek approval from the OVW Director on a case-by-case basis to waive the conflict of interest. In such an instance, the OVW Program Unit must document that a waiver is necessary because the need for the reviewer’s services outweighs the potential for a conflict of interest. In the unlikely event that the OVW Director grants the waiver, the reviewer will not be permitted to serve on the panel reviewing the application to which the reviewer is connected. Please see below the role of a peer reviewer for more information.

## PEER REVIEW PROCESS

OVW conducts two types of Peer Review: external and internal. External peer review utilizes reviewers outside of the federal government and internal utilizes federal staff, including OVW staff, as reviewers. OVW primarily conducts external peer reviews, which may take place online, in person, or in a hybrid format. Online reviews offer greater cost efficiency, broaden the pool of potential reviewers, and automatically capture reviewer comments. In contrast, in-person reviews—which have been OVW’s standard for much of the past decade—can foster richer dialogue among reviewers, leading to more detailed and nuanced assessments. A hybrid format is an emerging and successful approach which blends the benefits of online and in-person reviews.

### Peer Review Formats

- Online Peer Review allows reviewers to evaluate and score applications remotely, with virtual panel consensus meetings held afterward. The process typically spans two to four weeks. A peer review orientation takes place before the review period

begins. During the first 1-2 week/s, reviewers independently read and score applications. Virtual consensus meetings occur after the review period. They are typically four to five hours per day and include a three-member panel, a recorder documenting consensus comments, and an OVW staff member facilitating and monitoring the discussion. The overall timeline depends on the total number of applications under review.

- Hybrid Peer Review allows reviewers to evaluate and score applications remotely, followed by in-person panel consensus meetings. This process typically spans two to three weeks. OVW hosts a peer review orientation before the review period begins. During the first 1-2 week/s, reviewers read and score applications independently. After the review period, reviewers meet in person for a day long consensus meeting (approximately 8 hours each) at a designated location. Each panel includes three reviewers, a recorder to capture consensus comments, and an OVW staff member who facilitates and monitors the discussions. The overall timeline depends on the number of applications under review.
- In-person Peer Review takes place at a designated location, where reviewers both evaluate applications and hold consensus meetings. The process typically spans three to five days (depending on whether one or two sessions are needed to complete the review). OVW provides a peer review orientation either virtually before the review or in person on the first day. For each session, reviewers spend one day reading and scoring applications, followed by a full day (8 hours) of in-person consensus meetings. Each panel includes three reviewers, a recorder to document consensus comments, and an OVW staff member to facilitate and monitor the discussion.

In FY 2025, OVW will conduct online peer reviews for most of the grant programs in an effort to reduce costs. In addition, OVW will implement several new formats for consensus meetings to pilot new strategies to make the process more efficient, while maintaining the integrity of the technical and programmatic evaluation of applications. OVW will conduct two types of consensus meetings.

### Consensus Meeting Formats

- Full Consensus Meetings: During full consensus meetings, panel members will discuss all applications assigned to their panel.
- Condensed Consensus Meetings: There are two types of condensed consensus meetings.
  - **Consensus based on recommendation thresholds**: This consensus meeting format relies on each program's historical funding recommendations, setting high and low scoring thresholds based on this history. Applications scoring above or below these thresholds will not be discussed during the consensus meeting; however, OVW will record the average score and compile comments. Applications with individual reviewer's scores that fall between the thresholds will be fully discussed during the consensus meeting to come up with a final average score and consensus comments.



- **Consensus based on a 10 point or more variance:** This consensus meeting format uses each panel member's initial scores to determine which applications will be discussed. Applications where all reviewers scores are within a 10-point range will not be discussed, however OVW will record the average score and compile reviewer comments. Applications with a score variance of 10 points or more between reviewers will be discussed during the consensus meeting to come up with a final average score and consensus comments.

## The Role of the Peer Reviewer

Selected peer reviewers are expected to dedicate sufficient time to thoroughly review assigned applications and participate in the orientation and panel consensus meetings. Reviewers should avoid scheduling professional or personal commitments during the designated peer review period, regardless of whether the review is online, hybrid, or in person. Please note that in rare cases, OVW has had to reduce reviewer compensation or remove a reviewer from participation due to significant failure to complete scoring obligations. Rushed or incomplete reviews compromise the fairness of the process and negatively affect applicants, fellow reviewers, and OVW staff. Incomplete or late submissions may impact a reviewer's future opportunities to participate in OVW peer review.

### A. Mandatory Peer Review Orientation

All reviewers must attend a virtual or in-person peer review orientation. During this session, OVW staff will review the NOFO, program requirements, and scoring form, as well as explain the peer review process. OVW will also provide an overview of roles and responsibilities of the peer reviewers, OVW Staff, and the Peer Review contractor. OVW will provide reviewers with a scoring form that reflects the NOFO criteria on which to record their scores, strengths, and areas for improvement.

### B. Reviewing the NOFO and Scoring Form

The NOFO describes the grant program, eligibility requirements, required certifications, the program's statutory purposes and priority areas, and information on how to apply.

NOFOs include the required scoring criteria and the point allocation for each section of the application. Peer reviewers should thoroughly review the relevant discretionary program NOFO and scoring form to understand the evaluation criteria before assessing applications. Since the Peer Reviewer Rating Form mirrors the NOFO's scoring criteria, reviewers must pay close attention to those details throughout the review process.

### C. Compliance with Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Policy

Peer reviewers should be cognizant at all times of OVW's policies, described above, concerning confidentiality and conflicts of interest. Reviewers must maintain the confidentiality of the Peer Review process and refrain from sharing any information about the applications assigned to their panel, and any discussion about the applications, outside of the panel meetings. This includes discussing applications in the hotel lobby and other public areas at



Peer Review. Should a Peer review panel member receive a request for application materials, panel discussion information, recommendations, information regarding the review process in general, or about a specific application, the reviewer must notify the designated OVW Peer Review Point of Contact and the peer review contractor immediately. Also, please do not review applications outside of your hotel room and panel room, as well as outside your home if you are a local reviewer or participating in peer review in an online or hybrid format. **In addition, during the review of their assigned applications, a reviewer may become aware of possible conflicts of interest and/or issues that may call into question their impartiality or objectivity regarding an application. In order to address the conflict in a timely fashion, reviewers must immediately bring the conflict to the attention of an OVW staff member or the Peer Review contractual staff for resolution.** The OVW Peer Review POC will determine if the issue identified rises to the level of a possible conflict of interest. If the issue identified rises to the level of an actual conflict of interest or creates an appearance of partiality the OVW Peer Review POC will reassign the reviewer or the application to another panel.

Peer reviewers are required to review and sign/initial the confidentiality and conflicts of interest forms prior to reading and scoring any applications. Peer reviewers who do not submit required forms may lose the opportunity to review assigned applications and may not be eligible to receive compensation for their participation. Peer reviewers must adhere to the confidentiality policy which can be found in the reviewer packet upon selection for peer review. Reviewers should review this document carefully and submit signed a copy of the policy before commencing the review of any assigned applications.

#### D. Reading Applications

Peer reviewers are typically assigned 8-10 applications and given a designated reading period to complete individual evaluations. Reviewers should assess each application against criteria outlined in the NOFO and scoring form. Generally, applications should not be compared to one another, however, under the Technical Assistance Initiative, different considerations may apply. Reviewers should allocate sufficient time to carefully read, evaluate, and score each application. OVW staff will be available during the reading period (during business hours) to answer questions regarding the NOFO or the scoring form.

When reading an application, understand that many organizations do not have access to professional grant writers so while the writing may not be polished, the project could still be strong.

Peer reviewers should give equal value to secular and non-secular applicants and project partners. No eligible applicant will be discriminated against on the basis of its religious character or affiliation, religious name, or the religious composition of its board of directors or persons working in the organization. Faith-based organizations receiving OVW funding should retain their independence and do not need to modify their religious identity (e.g., removing religious symbols) to receive OVW funding. In addition, any inherently religious activities must be separated in time or place from grant funded activities.

Applications will be scored based on how well the applicant responds to each section and addresses every element outlined within it. Reviewers will assess the quality and level of detail provided. Each element **must** appear in its designated section; placing information elsewhere may result in point deductions. Each section is reviewed and scored independently. However, when rating the budget, reviewers must evaluate it in relation to the Program Narrative.

Peer reviewers should provide detailed notes regarding the applicant's responsiveness to the criteria on the scoring form.

Reviewers play a critical role in ensuring funding decisions support communities across the country. A reviewer's ability to prepare clear and concise comments about an application, both oral and written, is essential to the process. During panel consensus meetings, reviewers will be asked to justify their scores. Reviewers have been selected for their expertise. As such, reviewers' notes should clearly identify why points were deducted from a particular criterion or why no points were deducted. Notes should include page numbers from applications whenever possible, as this will assist with the panel discussion. All comments on the Peer Reviewer Rating Form must directly reflect the NOFO's scoring criteria. OVW may refer to individual Peer Reviewer Rating Forms when clarifying consensus comments or responding to applicant inquiries. Additionally, reviewers should avoid including opinions and information not contained in the application when scoring applications.

### **Panel Consensus Meetings**

Once the reading period is complete, panel members will meet to discuss the designated applications. Some programs may have a panel review one application and discuss that application prior to reviewing all applications. This gives the panel an opportunity to better understand the process and provides peer reviewers and OVW staff the opportunity to see the reviewing style of all panel members. It can also allow first-time reviewers to become comfortable with the process.

Peer reviewers must read, evaluate, and score each application assigned to them **before** the Peer Review panel convenes. Reviewers are expected to arrive to virtual or in person panel meetings on time with scoring forms completed and fully prepared to discuss the applications (including scores and comments). Established panel times can be modified slightly if agreed upon by all panel members and approved by the OVW Program Peer Review Point of Contact and the Peer Review contractor to ensure the availability of an OVW staff member and a meeting recorder. **A panel should not begin discussions without an OVW staff member and meeting recorder present unless otherwise directed to by the Program Peer Review Point of Contact.** During the consensus meeting, OVW staff will be available to assist the panel by answering substantive or programmatic questions.

The primary purposes of the panel discussion are to highlight shared comments regarding the application's responsiveness to the NOFO and identify any significant differences in scoring. Reviewers should agree about whether the application includes all required elements for successful project implementation. The discussion should aim toward scoring consensus, where possible. While reviewers are not required to revise their scores, they are expected to

respectfully consider the comments of the other reviewers. If a reviewer changes any scores during the consensus conversation, they must update the Peer Reviewer Rating Form, indicating that the change has been made to the original assessment. To the extent possible, peer reviewers should attempt to reach consensus on scores and/or comments. After the discussion and score adjustments, an average final score is determined.

The panel should come up with a list of agreed upon strengths and areas for improvement for each application (i.e., believed by the majority of the panel). The meeting recorder will capture these consensus comments for each section of the application on a summary consensus report. It is important that the panel's consensus comments are supported by its final numerical scores.

#### Reviewer Facilitation within Consensus Meetings

Reviewers will rotate the facilitator role during the consensus meeting, serving as the “lead reviewer” (OVW may assume the facilitation role in limited cases). The lead reviewer for each application is responsible for facilitating the panel's discussion and eliciting consensus comments for their assigned applications. The lead reviewer is responsible for ensuring that:

1. scores have been recorded accurately on each panelist's individual scoring form, the panel's matrix consensus form, and the electronic or flip chart matrix form.
2. all changes to scores have been noted in red ink/font, the panelists have initialed all of their changes, and all figures are calculated correctly.
3. the panel provides complete, accurate, and final consensus comments for each section of the application.

The OVW Peer Review contractor will certify all scores by verifying individual peer reviewer scoring forms against the recorder's notes and the scoring matrix forms for each consensus meeting.

#### **Tips for more Effective Consensus Comments**

When developing strengths and areas of improvement during panel discussions, consider the following strategy: 1) Assume that any application that does not receive a perfect score may not be funded, even if scored very high, since scores from other panels are unknown. 2) Given this assumption, what would it take to give that application a perfect score? Use that as the foundation for the comments.

#### *Tips for Preparing Comments:*

1. Write comments in complete sentences that are constructive and respectful. Cite page numbers when describing strengths and areas for improvement to support discussion and help applicants understand the feedback.
2. Avoid using general comments (e.g. “The application should follow the prompts in the NOFO”). Be as specific as possible. Focus on what would help the applicant to improve their proposal.
3. Identify where the application contradicts the intent or requirements of the NOFO.

4. Ensure comments reflect an evaluation of the application as a whole or a particular section of the application. When citing a strength or area for improvement, describe what a more effective approach or practice might be.
5. Confirm that all comments are accurate. If you identify any inaccuracy, revise them in the scoring form and/or during the panel meeting.
6. When reviewing an application's budget, verify that the budget aligns with program narrative and NOFOs requirements. Budgets should not include unrelated, out-of-scope, or unallowable expenses. Consider whether items are essential and reasonable for the success of the project, while recognizing that cost of living and service delivery costs vary across the country.

### **The Role of the Recorder**

Each OVW peer review panel will be supported by a recorder who will capture the panel's consensus strengths and areas for improvement comments and create a consensus report for each application. Complete and accurate consensus reports are critical to the Peer Review process as they assist grant program staff in making funding recommendations and are used to provide constructive feedback to the applicants. All recorders are required to take part in a mandatory orientation to discuss OVW's expectations during the Peer Review process.

**Please note that the recorder is not a substantive or programmatic expert, and therefore, should not answer substantive or programmatic questions.**

The primary responsibility of the recorder is to:

1. Keep an accurate record of scores, including initial scores and averages; changes in scores (if applicable); and final scores and averages.
2. Accurately record consensus strengths and areas for improvement, as dictated by the reviewers.
3. Alert OVW staff and/or the lead reviewer for that application of any potential discrepancies among peer reviewers' strengths and areas for improvement to ensure that conflicting comments are addressed prior to the end of the discussion for each application.

During the consensus meeting, recorders will:

1. Capture panelists' consensus comments for each application (consensus defined as agreement by a majority of the panel). Recorders should capture as much detail as possible, avoiding paraphrasing.
2. When necessary, ask for clarification to ensure that reviewers' comments have been correctly captured. Recorders are not subject matter experts, so reviewers should avoid using acronyms.

3. Read back the consensus comments to panelists to confirm all comments were captured before the panel moves to the next critical element section.

### **After Peer Review**

In order to maintain the integrity and confidentiality of the peer review process, reviewers should not reference the specific OVW program(s) they reviewed. However, they may divulge their participation generally, e.g., stating on a resume that they served as an OVW peer reviewer.

### **OVW's Role After Peer Review is Conducted**

As mentioned previously, while critical to the process, the peer reviewer's role is advisory in nature. In addition to the peer review scores, OVW considers several factors when making funding decisions, including past performance of grantees, geographic diversity, populations to be served, statutory mandates, and other agency priorities.

The OVW Director is ultimately responsible for making all funding decisions. Applicants who are not recommended for funding will typically be notified by October 1st of the fiscal year in which the application was submitted. In accordance with OVW policy, applicants will not be told the names of peer reviewers or the scores assigned to their applications. However, applicants may request a copy of the panel's consensus comments outlining strengths and areas for improvement.

## **APPENDIX A**

- Sample Conflict of Interest
- Confidentiality Forms
- Adherence to Timeline Forms

**CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND CONFIDENTIALITY**  
**[See attachment]**

**DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST CHECKLIST**

It is the policy of the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) that a peer reviewer shall not participate in the review of any application when he or she has a real or potential conflict of interest. Please INITIAL BESIDE EACH conflict of interest situation confirming that you DO NOT have the specified conflict of interest.

☐ I have not been, nor will I be, directly involved in this project or any other project (e.g., as a current or past advisory board member, board of directors, consultant, collaborator, or conference speaker whose expenses would be paid from the grant).

☐ I am not employed by the same institution or organization as the applicant, nor was I employed there within the past year.

☐ I have not collaborated with the applicant within the past year on work related to the proposal.

☐ I am not now nor have been under consideration within the last year for a position at the applicant's organization or institution.

☐ I have not served in an official capacity with the applicant's organization within the past year.

☐ My organization does not have members or closely affiliated officials (e.g., board of trustees members) who serve in an official capacity with the applicant's organization or institution.

☐ I do not have a familial or current/former romantic relationship with any individuals employed by the applicant or any of the partnering organizations on the project.

☐ I have not had professional or personal relationships with the project director, or other key personnel identified in the application, including as a student, thesis advisor, or postdoctoral advisor.

☐ The applicant and I are not known to be either close friends or open antagonists.

☐ I do not have an application under review by OVW within the same grant program that I am reviewing.



☐ I have never conducted a formal program process or outcome evaluation of the assigned applications.

☐ I have not provided substantial technical assistance to any of the applicants assigned to my panel.

☐ I am not reviewing any applications submitted from a jurisdiction located within my primary state of residence or employment or submitted by a Tribe of which I am a member.

Your signature on this document indicates that each application will be reviewed and scored impartially with no biases, either for or against, and based only on the merits and guidelines outlined in the grant program NOFO.

I certify that I have no conflicts of interest in performing the assigned task(s). I have informed OVW Staff or the Contractor of any prior knowledge or interest in any documents or information pertinent to this assignment.

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Please identify any proposal(s) of conflict:

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Legal Name (Printed)

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Signature

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Date

---

Program Name

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Panel Number

**OFFICE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN  
CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

I agree to treat as absolutely confidential all application materials, names of all applicants, reviewer identities, comments, deliberations, scores, and recommendations. I will not provide any information before, during, or after the review to anyone outside OVW or the Contractor staff. If I am contacted for information about the applications, an applicant, or the Peer Review process, I will immediately notify **Ms. Jessica Neal**, OVW's Peer Review Contracting Officer's Representative (COR), at **202-514-0398**. I understand that failure to comply with this policy will result in my removal from the OVW Peer Review Consultant Pool.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**ADHERENCE TO TIMELINE**

I agree to complete all tasks per the dates referenced in the Assignment of Task letter. If requirements and schedules are not met, this contract is subject to cancellation, with reduced or withheld payment for services.

**I have reviewed this contract agreement, and my signature affixed below is evidence that I agree to perform the assigned task(s) according to the specifications outlined in this letter.**

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Signature

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Date

## **APPENDIX B**

- Training for Peer Reviewers of Grant Applications Faith-based and Community Organization as Applicants
- Summary of USDOJ's Equal Treatment Regulation Executive Order 13279

**United States Department of Justice  
Office on Violence Against Women**

**Guidelines for Peer Reviewers of Applications  
From Faith-Based and Community Organizations**

*In scoring grant applications, OVW's peer reviewers will treat faith-based and other community organizations ("FBCOs") equally, regardless of their religious mission or lack thereof. Listed below are guidelines to help you meet this requirement:*

- An eligible applicant or grantee must not be discriminated for or against on the basis of: 1) its religious character or affiliations, 2) religious name, 3) religious mission statement, 4) the religious composition of its board of directors, or 5) persons working in the organization.
- Use the same scoring criteria for both faith-based and secular nonprofit organizations. Give the grant applications of faith-based organizations equal consideration to those of secular nonprofit and for-profit grant applicants.
- Among faith-based applicants, do not favor or disfavor an application based on the particular faith or denomination of the applicant.
- Do not assume anything about an applicant's qualifications from that fact that the applicant is or is not faith-based. Indeed, do not assume anything beyond what is written. You should not give an applicant the benefit of the doubt, or assume the worst, based on information or presumptions you have about the applicant, its religious beliefs, or its religious activities.
- Assume that a faith-based applicant will abide by all the rules of OVW and DOJ. This includes the requirement that grantees serve all eligible beneficiaries, regardless of their religion or their interest or disinterest in participating in the religious activities of the applicant. In other words, unless you have evidence in the proposal that the applicant will not obey these rules, do not assume that they will not obey them just because the applicant is faith-based in character or evangelistic in mission.
- Be honest about your ability to be objective in scoring a proposal from a particular religion, sect, or denomination, or from a group with an atheistic or agnostic philosophy. Treat such a bias as you must any other conflict of interest: immediately notify OVW and decline to score that proposal.

- Where a program calls for or gives points for collaborations with non-government organizations, remember that the latter includes FBCOs. The same amount of credit or number of points should be given to applications showing such collaborations regardless of whether they involve faith-based or secular organizations.
- Previous grantees should not be favored over first-time or previously unsuccessful applicants. Scoring may be based in part on demonstrated capacity to meet program goals. But that capacity can exist in an applicant that has not previously sought public funds.

## **Summary of USDOJ's Equal Treatment Regulation 28 C.F.R. Part 38**

It is DOJ policy that faith-based and other community organizations that statutorily qualify as eligible applicants under DOJ programs are invited and encouraged to apply for assistance awards to fund eligible grant activities. Faith-based and other community organizations will be considered for awards on the same basis as other eligible applicants and, if they receive assistance awards, will be treated on an equal basis with all other grantees in the administration of such awards. No eligible applicant or grantee will be discriminated for or against on the basis of its religious character or affiliation, religious name, or the religious composition of its board of directors or persons working in the organization. Programs funded by DOJ are not permitted to discriminate in the provision of services on the basis of a beneficiary's religion.

For the full text of the Regulation see 28 C.F.R. Part 38.