

Minnesota Department of Public Safety
Office of Justice Programs
Crime Victim Services
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Request for Proposals

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) S.T.O.P.
24-month and 36-month Special Projects
Beginning January 1, 2015

Description

Purpose

This RFP is designed to solicit proposals to develop and strengthen effective law enforcement and prosecution strategies to combat violent crimes against women, including the crimes of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking. These funds are for time-limited special projects to create systems change by improving the criminal justice system's response to violence against women.

Note: *These funds are not intended for supporting on-going direct advocacy services to victims, or to sustain existing victim service programming. These funds are also not intended for Sexual Assault Multi-disciplinary Action Response Teams (SMART).*

Grant Term

Applicants may apply for a project timeline spanning either:

- the 24-month grant period of January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2016, or
- the 36-month grant period of January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2017.

Eligible Applicants

Public and private non-profit entities including local units of government and community-based non-profit organizations are eligible to apply for these funds. **Please note:** Tribal Reservation governments are not eligible to apply under this RFP: a competitive RFP open only for Tribal Reservations will be issued in late 2014, for VAWA special project funding to address the law enforcement and/or prosecution response to domestic and sexual violence on reservations.

For non-profits: Federal 501(c)3 tax exempt status is not required. To be eligible, an applicant must be legally incorporated as a non-profit in Minnesota and possess state and federal identification numbers. Community-based groups that are not yet incorporated are eligible to apply if using fiscal agents with non-profit status.

Application Deadline

Applications must be submitted using the web-based E-grants system by **4:00 p.m. on Monday, October 6, 2014**. No paper submissions will be accepted. Applications will not be received nor reviewed after this deadline.

Funds Available

Approximately \$928,000 is available for special projects. Eligible projects must be a collaborative effort between criminal justice system agencies and community-based sexual assault and/or domestic violence programs. Applicants may apply for grants of any amount, however it is anticipated the majority of awards will fall within the \$40,000 to \$150,000 range.

Special projects will be submitted in one of two categories:

- 1) Project to Address Protection Order Issues; and
- 2) Project to Address another STOP Program Purpose Area.

Approximately \$464,000 is available in each category. The Protection Order Issues category is a new area of focus for Minnesota's STOP funds, to target efforts addressing the multitude of protection order issues across the state. It is intended at this time that this category will be an area of focus for VAWA special project funding over a period of 8-10 years.

In addition, consideration for funding priority will be given to agencies that:

- 1) have not been funded for a STOP special project in the past 5 years, and
- 2) demonstrate capacity in their application to carry out their proposed project.

Application Process

All applications must be submitted via E-grants, the Office of Justice Program (OJP) online grants management system, at <https://app.dps.mn.gov/egrants/>. When ready to submit your application, click on "View Status Options" from your Grant Menu and then click on "Apply Status" under the *Application Submitted* option. For assistance submitting your application or navigating through the application, you should reference the Grantee/User Manual by clicking on the *Training Materials* link at the top of most E-grants screens. To establish a new user account, click on the purple "New User" option in the login box in the upper right corner of the E-grants homepage and fill out the profile.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- **For questions regarding the application, please contact your grant manager or:**
Chris Anderson, Office of Justice Programs, Minnesota Department of Public Safety:
chris.anderson@state.mn.us or 651-201-7302.
- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):**
A FAQ document will be updated weekly with responses to questions received about

the application, up until the October 6th due date. Access the FAQ on the OJP website: <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ojp/grants>.

Match Requirements

All applicants must be able to meet a cash or in-kind match. To calculate the match requirement for your specific application, multiply the amount for which you are requesting by 0.3334 and round up to the nearest dollar. Federal funds may not be used for match. All funds designated as match are restricted to the same uses as the VAWA program funds and must be expended within the grant period.

Examples of *cash match*: state or local government appropriations, individual donations, private foundation grants, United Way, etc. Examples of *in-kind match*: a) donations of such things as equipment, office supplies, office space, training materials; and b) monetary value of donated time providing program or technical support/services.

Grant Selection Process

1. Applications are due in E-grants by **4:00 p.m. on Monday, October 6, 2014**.
2. OJP staff and panels of grant reviewers review and rate applications using the criteria for funding. Grant review panels reflect the diversity of communities and the purpose and intent of funds. To ensure fair, impartial decisions, grant reviewers are bound by the strict OJP conflict of interest policy. Applicants do not have an opportunity to make a presentation to the grant review committee or to be present at the review; therefore it is important that all pertinent information be included in the application.
3. The panel's recommendations are forwarded to the executive director of OJP for final funding decisions. Applicants will receive written notice of the executive director's decision within 30 days of the grant review.
4. If your proposal is approved for funding, you may be asked to submit minor revisions to your proposal (e.g., to correct budget errors or clarify goals and objectives). After revisions are made, a formal grant agreement will be prepared and must be signed by the applicant organization and OJP. When the signature process is complete the applicant organization receives a final signed copy of the grant agreement and may be issued an advance payment. Upon issuance of the grant contract the application becomes a legally binding contract between the grantee and OJP.

Definitions

Domestic violence program = an organization, or program of an organization that has a primary mission of serving victims of domestic violence.

Sexual assault program = an organization, or program of an organization that has a primary mission of serving sexual assault victims.

Local unit of government = refers to any unit of government (e.g., city or county attorney's office, law enforcement agencies, etc.).

Traditionally underserved population = includes populations traditionally underserved because of geographic location (such as rural isolation), underserved racial, cultural or ethnic populations, and populations underserved because of special needs (such as language barriers, disabilities, immigration status, sexual orientation or age).

Diverse backgrounds = applicants should demonstrate their understanding that women have unique needs that may be based on ethnic and cultural background, age, disability, sexual orientation, income, geographic isolation, immigration status and so on. Your application should reflect an understanding of the diversity of your community. It should also include plans for addressing the unique needs of groups in your community.

Cultural proficiency = is demonstrated by incorporating, at all levels of the organization or project, the following: the importance of culture; the assessment of cross-cultural relations; vigilance towards the dynamics that result from cultural differences; the expansion of cultural knowledge and the adaptation of services to meet culturally specific needs (Cross, T.L., 1988). Some examples of cultural proficiency within an organization include:

- staff reflect the diverse population served
- staff are trained in cultural diversity and cross-cultural communication
- staff understand the unique set of stressors affecting communities of color and cultural communities that may impact their response to violence and/or service needs
- physical environment and programming reflects multiculturalism
- program has working relationships with cultural organizations and communities of color

Technical assistance = includes a variety of methods (e.g., training, onsite and phone consultation, meeting facilitation, protocol development, etc.) designed to assist an organization or community in improving their response to victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence or stalking.

Statutory Purpose Areas

Grants supported through the VAWA STOP program funds must meet one or more of the following statutory purpose areas. Not all STOP purpose areas are listed here – only those that pertain to special project funding to create systems change in the criminal justice system.

1. Training law enforcement officers, judges, other court personnel, and prosecutors to more effectively identify and respond to violent crimes against women, including the crimes of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and dating violence, including the use of nonimmigrant status under subparagraphs (U) and (T) of section 101(a)(15) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a)).
2. Developing, training, or expanding units of law enforcement officers, judges, other court personnel, and prosecutors specifically targeting violent crimes against women, including the crimes of sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and domestic violence.
3. Developing and implementing more effective police, court, and prosecution policies, protocols, orders, and services specifically devoted to preventing, identifying, and responding to violent crimes against women, including the crimes of sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and domestic violence, as well as the appropriate treatment of victims.
4. Developing, installing, or expanding data collection and communication systems, including computerized systems, linking police, prosecutors, and courts or for the purpose of identifying, classifying, and tracking arrests, protection orders, violations of protection orders, prosecutions, and convictions for violent crimes against women, including the crimes of sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and domestic violence.
5. Supporting formal and informal statewide, multidisciplinary efforts, to the extent not supported by State funds, to coordinate the response of state law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, courts, victim services agencies, and other state agencies and departments, to violent crimes against women, including the crimes of sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and dating violence.
6. Training of sexual assault forensic medical personnel examiners in the collection and preservation of evidence, analysis, prevention, and providing expert testimony and treatment of trauma related to sexual assault.
7. Developing, enlarging, or strengthening programs to assist law enforcement, prosecutors, courts, and others to address the needs and circumstances of older and disabled women who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or sexual assault, including recognizing, investigating, and prosecuting instances of such violence or assault and targeting outreach and support, counseling, and other victim services to such older and disabled individuals.

8. Developing, implementing, or enhancing Sexual Assault Response Teams, or other similar coordinated community responses to sexual assault.
9. Developing and strengthening policies, protocols, best practices, and training for law enforcement agencies and prosecutors relating to the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault cases and the appropriate treatment of victims.
10. Identifying and conducting inventories of backlogs of sexual assault evidence collection kits and developing protocols and policies for responding to and addressing such backlogs, including protocols and policies for notifying and involving victims.

Project Activities

The emphasis of VAWA funding continues to be on the implementation of comprehensive strategies addressing violence against women that are sensitive to the needs and safety of victims and hold offenders accountable for their crimes. All states, including Minnesota, are being asked to carry out these strategies by forging lasting partnerships between the criminal justice system and victim advocacy organizations, and by encouraging communities to look beyond traditional resources and to look to new partners to respond more vigorously to domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking crimes, such as faith-based and community organizations.

Special project grants funded under this RFP are intended to create permanent improvements in the criminal justice system's response to violence against women. Funded activities must add value and be efforts that are above and beyond what currently exist in the community. Funds are not intended to sustain existing programming. Applicants will be asked to complete a sustainability narrative to address sustainability of the systems change generated by this project funding.

Activities That May Compromise Victim Safety

Ensuring victim safety is the guiding principle underlying the VAWA funding program. The following activities have been found to jeopardize victim safety, deter or prevent physical or emotional healing for victims, or allow offenders to escape responsibility for their actions and cannot be supported with VAWA funding:

- Procedures or policies that exclude victims from receiving safe shelter, advocacy services, counseling, and other assistance based on their actual or perceived age, immigration status, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identify, mental health condition, physical health condition, criminal record, work in the sex industry, relationship to the perpetrator, or the age and/or gender of their children;
- Procedures or policies that compromise the confidentiality of information and privacy of persons receiving OVW-funded services;

- Offering perpetrators the option of entering pre-trial diversion programs or placing batterers in anger management programs;
- Requiring mediation or counseling for couples as a systemic response to domestic violence or sexual assault, or in situations in which child sexual abuse is alleged;
- Requiring victims to report sexual assault, stalking, or domestic violence crimes to law enforcement or forcing victims to participate in criminal proceedings;
- Relying on court-mandated batterer intervention programs that do not use the coercive power of the criminal justice system to hold batterers accountable for their behavior;
- Supporting policies or engaging in practices that impose restrictive conditions to be met by the victim in order to receive services (e.g., attending counseling, seeking an order for protection);

In addition, applicants should be cognizant of victim confidentiality. In accordance with 42 U.S.C. § 13925(b)(2), applicants receiving OVW funding must protect the confidentiality and privacy of persons receiving OVW-funded services to support victims' safety. OVW grantees and their sub-grantees are prohibited from disclosing personally identifying information collected in connection with services requested, utilized, or denied through the grantee and their sub-grantee's programs, to any third party or third party database without informed, written, reasonably time-limited, consent of the person, unless compelled by statutory or court mandate. In this case, grantees and sub-grantees must make reasonable attempts to provide notice to victims affected by the disclosure of information. They must also take necessary steps to protect the privacy and safety of the persons affected by the release of the information. Regarding un-emancipated minors or persons with disabilities lacking capacity to consent, a parent or guardian may consent to the disclosure; however, if the parent or guardian is the abuser of the minor, the person with disabilities, or the minor's other parent, he or she is prohibited from giving consent to the disclosure.

Unallowable Activities

The following activities are unallowable with VAWA funding:

- Lobbying
- Fundraising
- Purchase of real property
- Construction
- Physical modifications to building, including minor renovations (such as painting or carpeting)

Food and Beverage Costs

Neither VAWA funds nor match funds can be used to purchase food and/or beverages for any meeting, conference, training, or other event, except if the following applies:

- The location of the event is not in close proximity to food establishments. (It should be a priority to try to secure a location near reasonably priced and accessible commercial food establishments.)

- Not serving food will significantly lengthen the day or necessitate extending the meeting to achieve meeting outcomes.
- A special presentation at a conference requires a plenary address where there is no other time for food to be obtained; or
- Other extenuating circumstances which necessitate the provision of food.

If you include food and/or beverage costs in your application and budget, you must make your case for the appropriate exemption(s) listed above. This may or may not be approved. Include this information in the narrative, section b. *Project overview, systems change & problems*.

Criteria for Funding

Application Components

The following will be addressed in the E-grants application:

A. Applicant Form

Applicants need to complete every field of the form provided. This form lists the authorized representatives for the program and other identifying information.

B. Terms and Conditions

All applicants must acknowledge that they have read the *Terms and Conditions* and that the *Terms and Conditions* will be incorporated into their Grant Agreement if funded.

C. Grant Program Guidelines

All applicants must acknowledge that they have read the *Grant Program Guidelines* and that the *Grant Program Guidelines* will be incorporated into their Grant Agreement if funded. Applicants must also upload signed certifications indicating they will meet the requirements of receiving federal VAWA STOP funding upon being awarded a grant.

D. General and Administrative Standards

All applicants must demonstrate that their organization meets or has a plan for meeting all *General and Administrative Standards* by December 31, 2014.

E. Narrative

Applicants need to address the following (a through d) in a *Microsoft Word* document with ¾" margins, single spaced, with a 12 point font size comparable to "Times New Roman." When ready to submit, the narrative will be uploaded in E-grants. Please use the lettered headings and subheadings for the numbered lists. *Out of respect for the application reviewers we ask that applicants follow the page guidelines provided. Reviewers may deduct points on applications over the page guidelines.*

a. **Overview of total agency – 10 points** (1-page)

Provide a brief overview of the organization, including the agency's mission, brief history, and primary activities/purpose. (If the application project is focused toward a particular underserved community or population, provide evidence of cultural competency in serving women from that community who have been victims of violence.)

b. **Project overview, systems change & problems – 40 points** (2-4 pages)

Provide, in clear detail:

1. A clear, comprehensive description of the project;
2. Precisely what system changes are being attempted;
3. Identification of the problems being addressed;
4. An explanation of the strategies you've chosen (e.g., why do you think the strategies you've chosen will work); and
5. How women who are victims of violence will benefit from this project. If applying to serve a particular underserved community or population, identify this and address the unique safety needs of women in that community.)

c. **Evaluation plan – 15 points** (1-page)

Provide a comprehensive plan that clearly describes:

1. What specifically is being evaluated, and why;
2. How the evaluation will be developed; and
3. What evaluation methods and tools will be used.

All collaborative partners in the project should be a part of the evaluation plan.

d. **Sustainability plan – 10 points** (1-page)

Provide evidence of a plan, from the outset, to sustain the accomplishments of the project after the grant period ends. Explain how the systems change efforts will continue and through what means.

F. **Work Plan – 25 points** (no page guidelines)

Applicants must download the blank *Work Plan* form in E-grants and then upload it back into E-grants. The work plan should include objectives (1 to 4, measurable, identifying what you plan to achieve during the grant period). Each objective should have activities (1 to 6 steps or tasks in achieving the objective). Include time frames and positions responsible for each activity.

Reviewers look for clear, measurable objectives that are well planned, can be accomplished within the allotted time, and will be effective in addressing the needs the applicant has identified. Reviewers look for how the proposed project intends to create systems change that will improve the criminal justice system response to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and/or stalking.

G. Budget

This criterion refers to the reasonableness of line items and total budget in relation to anticipated results. Budget forms will be assessed for the relevance and allowability of costs to program objectives, whether the outcomes appear achievable within the proposed budget, if personnel costs demonstrate adequate staffing and whether budget items are clearly described and justified.

Other Considerations

The following will also be considered in funding decisions:

Inclusiveness of Plan

Reviewers evaluate proposals for how well the needs of victims/survivors from diverse backgrounds are addressed when developing project activities.

Completeness of Plan & Compelling Need

This criterion refers to the applicant's complete and thorough response to all information requested in this application, and the compelling need for the project activities as described by applicant.

Duplication of Services

If more than one organization proposes activities in a given area or for a particular community, applicants may be required to demonstrate that: 1) the proposed project is not a duplication of activities; and 2) other programs in the proposed area support the project.

Past Performance

If an applicant is a current or former OJP grantee, consideration will be given to outstanding reports due, uncompleted projects, unspent or returned funds, status in regard to compliance with applicable standards, and termination of a grant due to noncompliance with the terms of a grant agreement.

Past VAWA Special Project Funding

Applicants' frequency of receiving STOP special project awards will be reviewed.

Consideration for funding priority will be given to agencies that:

- 1) have not been funded for a STOP special project in the past 5 years, and
- 2) demonstrate capacity in their application to carry out their proposed project.

Geographic and Other Considerations

Consideration will be given to the geographic location of proposed services to ensure overall distribution of funds throughout the state. VAWA STOP funding as a whole must be distributed to equally address domestic violence and sexual violence, thus consideration will be given to ensure funded projects reflect that overall equal distribution.

Rejection of Proposals and Incurring Costs

This RFP is made for information and planning purposes only. The State of Minnesota does not intend to award any grant solely on the basis of a response made to this request or pay for any information solicited or obtained. The state reserves the right to reject any and all proposals received as a result of this RFP. The State of Minnesota is not liable for costs incurred by applicants prior to the issuance of a grant.

Reporting

All programs awarded funds are required to complete program narrative and financial reports in E-grants. Grantees will also be required to submit the *U.S. Department of Justice VAWA STOP Annual Progress Report* at the conclusion of each calendar year.