Office on Violence Against Women National Service Line for Incarcerated Survivors of Sexual Abuse Pre-Application Information Session

MARNIE SHIELS: Hello everyone, and welcome to our pre-application webinar on the National Service Line for Incarcerated Survivors of Sexual Abuse solicitation. I am Marnie Shiels, and I'm actually one of the attorneys here at OVW, but I've been working very closely on this initiative. Also with us today is Amy Loder, who is the associate director over this solicitation.

The purpose of this webinar is for me to go over the requirements of the solicitation and the application process and then answer any questions you have about how to apply. I will pause periodically for questions. Feel free to put your questions in the chat, and then at the points where I pause for questions, I will take a minute to answer any questions that you have put in.

There's also closed captioning on this webinar, and so you can elect to see the captioning if you would like to have that feature. As I mentioned, the purpose of this session is to go over this solicitation. I am going to highlight some key sections, but I'm not going to go through every single detail because there's not time for that. I very strongly encourage you to read the solicitation in its entirety and to follow all of the instructions about how to apply. The solicitation contains detailed information about eligibility, application requirements, and instructions on how to apply. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that they are eligible and that they submit a complete application. In addition to the pauses for questions, I will take some time for questions and answers at the end. If you still have questions that I have not been able to answer, you can email the same email address that you used to enroll in this webinar in order to submit additional questions.

So just very briefly, for any of you who may not be familiar with the Office on Violence Against Women, we are a component of the Department of Justice. We were created in 1995 to administer grant programs authorized by the Violence Against Women Act and subsequent legislation, and particularly to focus on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. In general, our grants support coordinated community responses to hold offenders accountable and provide services for victims.

This slide gives you some key information at a glance on this solicitation, and I'm going to go into a lot more detail about most of this later. Eligible applicants are either victim service providers or nonprofit non-governmental organizations providing training and technical assistance. I'm going to go into a lot more detail about that, but if you're not one of these types of entities, then you will not be eligible for this program. The solicitation also specifies some additional expertise and experience that these entities have to have in order to be eligible, and also partners, and what types of experience and expertise those partners need to have. This grant will be for three years, or 36 months, and it will be for up to $2 million. The application process that we use at DOJ is a two-step process where you have to apply through two different

online portals: the grants.gov portal and the JustGrants website. There are two different deadlines. The grants.gov deadline is on the 12th of November, and the JustGrants deadline is on the 14th. But you do not have to wait until these deadlines. Particularly for grants.gov, there's not very much that you need to apply to get past that, and we encourage you to do it as quickly as possible. If you have not applied for federal grants before, you will need to do some other registration steps before you're able to register in grants.gov, which includes registering for the System for Award Management and getting a Unique Identifier, which we call a UEI. If you miss that November 12 deadline, you will not be able to apply in JustGrants. So that's another reason why we encourage you to do that grants.gov step as soon as possible.

I'm going to talk more about that process in a minute. So basically, this program is to implement the recommendations of the report Building a Service Line to Support Incarcerated Survivors of Sexual Abuse. That report talks about two different things: victim services and external reporting for victims in corrections. This program is only going to focus on the victim services side, not the reporting side.

This is part of a two-phase project. Phase one was to assess the feasibility of creating the service line and develop a blueprint for the line. That report is the outcome of phase one. Now, this is phase two, which is to do a pilot test. The report recommended two different models of how to run this type of service line. The pilot is going to test both models, with each model in two states, for a total of four states. However, it will be one entity receiving the grant and administering the service line in all four states.

So for model one, which will be two states, the successful applicant will provide sub-awards to an entity in each of those two states, which could be like a rape crisis center, a sexual assault coalition, and that entity will actually respond to the calls. So the victim will call a single phone number. In all four of the states, they'll call the same phone number, but in the two states that are model one, that call will be forwarded to whatever the sub-recipient is in that particular state, the local entity.

For model two, which will be implemented in two additional states, the successful applicant will operate the line and will respond to calls for services directly. So victims in those states will call again the same single phone number, but the recipient themselves will be the one answering the calls and providing the services. So again, it's in four states, two different models, but it's one single grantee for $2 million for 36 months to test these two different models. You can suggest in your application if you have states in mind or states that you think would be good, but the final selection of the states will be made after the award is issued, in consultation with OVW and with other federal partners, and will take into account factors like geographic diversity, diversity of the types of facilities in the state, such as prisons, jails, Tribal facilities, rural facilities, urban facilities, etc.

An additional thing that's in that report is that it lists certain required components. This list is the required components that the recipient will also need to meet with the service line, and so the application should address how they plan to meet these required components. For example, the providers specializing in trauma-informed emotional support services need to be the ones

providing the services. There need to be multiple means of communication because every facility is different in terms of how the inmates are able to reach out. So it might be telephonic, but it might be some kind of chat, texting, email, letters, video calls, and it has to be compatible with the different phone lines that would be used by the inmates and by the facilities.

Privacy and confidentiality need to be offered to the extent possible in all of those means. It needs to be accessible for different underserved populations, so think about Deaf victims, victims with disabilities, victims that are not English speaking, LGBT victims, things like that. It needs to be accessible. Then the system stakeholders need to have training -- so the facilities need training on how to use the line, how to give referrals to the line, and there also needs to be comprehensive and frequent education for the incarcerated people on the availability of the line, what kinds of services they can provide, how to access it, and so forth. There needs to be routine maintenance. There also needs to be data collection and analysis, such as data on victims served in each of the pilot states, type of facility, demographic information about the victims, and services provided.

As I mentioned, the budget will be for up to $2 million, and that's including both direct and indirect costs. One of the things you fill out is called an SF-424, and you will have to provide the total amount of funding requested on that form, and it will need to reflect 36 months. All awards are subject to the availability of funds and any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law. You need to make sure that your budget includes funding for accessibility, as I mentioned, for different underserved populations, and also compensation for your project partners. In a minute, I'm going to talk about details of what you need to have from those partners.

I'm going to go ahead and pause for questions now because I see there's some questions in the chat. Um, no, there's not any questions in the chat. I will keep going.

So first, next, sorry, who can apply? As I mentioned, there are two different categories: victim service providers with experience providing services to victims of sexual assault in correctional settings. So not just any victim service provider, but you need to have that specific experience providing services to victims of sexual abuse in correctional settings. A victim service provider is defined as a nonprofit non-governmental or Tribal organization, or a rape crisis center, including a state or Tribal domestic violence and/or sexual assault coalition that assists or advocates for domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking victims, including a domestic violence shelter, faith-based organization, or other organization with a documented history of effective work concerning domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Now, that is the statutory definition, but remember, in this case, we're looking for sexual assault experience specifically -- not all of those things -- specifically sexual assault, and it needs to be specifically with victims in correctional settings. Victim service providers need to provide direct services to victims as a primary purpose, and have a demonstrated history of effective work in this field. Culturally specific organizations, Tribal organizations, and population-specific organizations that meet that definition I just read are eligible to apply. But again, it has to have

specific expertise and experience providing sexual abuse support services, such as advocacy, crisis intervention, support groups, etc., for victims in corrections.

The second category is nonprofit non-governmental organizations that have provided training and technical assistance regarding services for sexual abuse victims in correctional settings. So an example of that would be somebody that has provided training through crisis centers on how to provide services to sexual abuse victims in corrections.

AMY LODER: Yeah, question on, so when you finish up eligibility, can you, can I interrupt you and go back to the question?

MARNIE SHIELS: Sure. So just to finish this, applicants have to meet one of the categories described above, and there are going to be meaningful partnerships that are required, and that's coming up. I will tell you more about who the partners are that you need to have. But specifically, you have to partner with individuals and organizations that possess the subject matter expertise that's outlined in the other program eligibility requirements section of the solicitation. So I will turn to the question now.

AMY LODER: OK, it is, could you elaborate on eligibility for number two? Does it need to be an applicant with a current TTA portfolio for SA incarcerated settings, meaning they have current funded projects for TTA?

MARNIE SHIELS: That is a good question. I think you do not need to have a current project, but you would need to document through your application how you have this experience.

Did that address your -- Oh, great. Thank you.

All right, so the applicant also needs to have some skill sets, and again, you're going to have to demonstrate this in the application that you have, that you as an organization, not you as a person, have these skill sets. So you have to have a documented history of managing large-scale -- Oops, didn't mean to do that, sorry -- managing large-scale projects financially, operationally, and programmatically. So for example, there might be state coalitions that have provided training and technical assistance on relevant topics or have provided the services, but if they have not provided something on this kind of a national scale with this level of a budget, they're not going to meet the skill sets here.

They also need to have experience providing training and technical assistance, again on a large scale, not just within a local area or within a state. And then they need to have the ability to coordinate among diverse people, perspectives, and interests seamlessly and efficiently.

And so then I'm going to turn to the partners. You know, as I mentioned, you have to have partners. So this expertise doesn't need to be every single person has this expertise. And the applicant themselves may have some of these things, but the idea is that collectively, the team that's part of the application needs to have all of these things. So experience and expertise on

working with corrections, expertise specifically on addressing sexual abuse in correctional settings, expertise in providing direct sexual assault victim services, which should be extensive and beyond managing a crisis hotline. The reason we call this a service line and not a hotline is because the idea is that it's very difficult for people in correctional settings to access services, and so this should be online services, not just crisis intervention, hotline-type services.

They need to have expertise in providing direct sexual assault victim services to underserved populations, such as populations underserved due to geographic location, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, underserved racial and ethnic populations, and populations underserved because of special needs, such as language barriers, disabilities, immigration status, or age. Then expertise in the various forms of communication that are used within correctional settings, such as the specific phone systems, chat, email, letters, etc., that are used, and the different communication technologies that would be used to implement this project.

OK, so as a reminder, if the person, if the applicant entity, is ineligible or doesn't meet all of these eligibility requirements, then it will not receive any further review. Our applications are subjected to a peer review process, but applications that are from ineligible entities or are incomplete, meaning they're missing key aspects of the application, will not be forwarded to peer review. Also, if there are significant activities that may compromise victim safety, out-of-scope activities, or unallowable costs, then they may also be removed from consideration.

And if you miss the application due date, you will not be considered unless there's a very small section -- I encourage you to read it in the application -- that has information on, for example, if there's a huge natural disaster. There are people affected by the hurricane right now. That patio, if it was due tomorrow, would have a legitimate basis for saying, "We need more time," that kind of thing. And there's a process for how to request an extension in that case. But otherwise, if it's late, it doesn't get reviewed.

We have a companion guide that is linked in the solicitation that has details about activities that may compromise victim safety, but the short form is that we will not fund activities that jeopardize victim safety, deter or prevent physical or emotional healing for victims, or allow offenders to escape responsibility. And if you have such activities in your application, you might receive a deduction in points, or if it's significant, you might be completely kicked out from further review.

So there are some program requirements. First, there will be a planning period of a minimum of six months. So even though we have this blueprint that the recipient will be following, there's still a need to plan. How are you going to implement the blueprint? And so for that six months, you'll have time to develop the specific work plan, the detailed goals, objectives, and timeline, the staffing plan, accessibility Plan, technology plan, etc. And then you'll also need to develop a process to select the four pilot states, and then actually carry out selecting the pilot states, and then develop a lot of policies and procedures, things like confidentiality, information sharing, communication, and facility participation.

More program requirements. And then I have a pause for questions because I see there's one in the chat. So first, maintain a close working relationship with OVW for project development and implementation, including regular coordination and meeting with OVW a minimum of once a month to discuss the project. This will be issued as a cooperative agreement and not a grant, which means a more significant level of OVW involvement in the project, and very much a partnership between the recipient and OVW.

And so we will expect the recipient to allow us to have a lot of involvement and to listen to us about what we're looking for and things like that. You'll need to submit all products for review and approval. Coordinate with OVW to identify consultants and advisors.

So again, propose who you think are the best people and the best partners in your application. But we might select somebody and come back and say we think you need an additional partner for this. You need to participate in OVW-sponsored training and technical assistance, collect data on performance indicators, and we will provide you with what you need for that. And then if we decide to do an assessment or evaluation, then you will need to participate in that process.

So now I'm going to pause for questions, and then I will talk about the contents of the application. Oh, there's not actually a question. Feel free to put your questions in the chat if you have any. And I am going to continue talking about now the contents of the application.

So the main things are the proposal narrative, the budget, and then the memorandum of understanding. These are the three things where, if they are not in your application, it will not continue to peer review. The letter of intent you will see in the solicitation is optional and non-binding. It's just to help us plan for peer review so that we know how many applicants are likely to come in. If you would like to send a letter of intent, you can send it to that same email address that you used to register for this -- OVW.PreUSServiceLine@us.doj.gov.

And then again, as I mentioned, the application contents: there's a narrative, a budget detail worksheet, and a memorandum of understanding, or MOU for short. If you're missing one of these, you do not get further consideration. So make sure you don't forget to attach anything before you submit your application.

Just a quick note on formatting and technical requirements. You do need to follow the requirements. These ones listed on the slide are also what is in the solicitation in terms of double space, size of pages, margins, fonts, page numbers, etc. If you submit a narrative that is more than 25 pages, we're just going to stop reading, and so whatever fantastic thing you had to say on page 26 will not be read and will not be scored. That's another important thing to note, is that each of these documents is separate and is reviewed separately. So if there's something that you think, "Oh, well, that's in the MOU, so I don't need to put it in the narrative because they'll see it there," don't do that. They're going to score each document separately according to the criteria listed for that specific document. So make sure whatever you have to say is in the right section of the application.

There's an abstract. This is not something that is scored, but it does help with the review of the application. It's just a brief summary of the project in plain language -- things like the title, the purpose, goals, and outcomes -- but very brief. And then this abstract often will become public information, so keep that in mind when you draft it. This does not count towards the 25-page limit; it's just a text box in JustGrants that you will type in.

So here's the narrative. This is very important because it is the bulk of the points for your project. So take your time and take the full amount of pages to really be able to describe what your plans are. There are certain things listed in the solicitation about what needs to be in the narrative. Make sure you address all of the points clearly. I encourage you to follow the order that's listed in the solicitation and to use headings and subheadings so that it's very easy for the peer reviewers to see that you, in fact, addressed all of the points.

So first, describe the planning process that you intend to use how you're going to implement the service line in the four states, including how you would plan to select the states to maximize the diversity of facility types. Describe what will be needed to identify and implement the mandatory components of the service line as relevant for victim services that are described in the report, including likely challenges and how you plan to address any such challenges. Describe how the proposed project will address the needs of underserved populations, particularly those who are overrepresented in correctional settings or who face additional challenges with outside communication in such settings.

And then describe how the project will address the needs of immigration detainees who might be housed in local jails. Because we know immigration detainees are often housed in local jails, we want to know how you would meet the needs of that specific population.

More points on the proposed narrative, and oops, I had number four twice, so I've gone over that one already. Number five: describe how the project will provide accessibility for people with disabilities and people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Describe how the project will provide accessibility for people with limited English proficiency. And then last, describe how survivors and other people with relevant lived experiences have helped to formulate your plans or will be involved in shaping and implementing the project. This is a fundamental priority of OVW to involve people with lived experiences as a way to ensure that the approach is informed by people who have direct experience with the issues that the approach is trying to alleviate.

So then the second section of the narrative -- there's two -- is who will implement the proposal. This is worth 30 points, so this will demonstrate that the applicant and the partners have the skill sets and expertise. So remember when I talked about the required skill sets, the required expertise that both the applicant has to have, and then the collective group with the applicant and the partners have to have? This is your opportunity to convince the reviewers that you and your partners meet that skill set and expertise.

So this section must first describe the qualifications of the applicant and how they meet the skill set. Identify or describe key personnel and what qualifications they have or will have. So if you don't know the person, you can identify, you know, Marnie Shiels, and here's her expertise. Or you can say, we're going to hire somebody, and this is the expertise they're going to have. And then three: identify the project partners and explain why each individual or organization was selected and how they meet the required expertise. You're welcome to attach job descriptions, and it will not count towards the page limit.

So the next section is the data requested with the application. There are some surveys that will pop up that you will need to fill out in JustGrants.

There's a pre-award risk assessment. All of our applicants fill this out. It is a requirement for all federal grants. And then there is an applicant questionnaire that is across all OVW grants, which just has some information about the entity applying for the grant. And then there is something called the NSLI SSA summary data sheet, which just has some information, again, about the organization and the application, such as, are you a nonprofit organization? Which category of applicant you're in, that type of thing.

None of these are scored, but they are required. You will not be able to submit the application without them.

So next is the budget narrative and worksheet. This is scored and worth 10 points. If you look at the solicitation, it has a lot of detail about what elements are required in the budget. There is a sample budget form, a sample filled-out budget, and some tips about how to fill out the budget. If you have not applied for federal grants before, I encourage you to spend some time studying those things because there's a specific way that we want the different expenses categorized, and they need to be specifically calculated.

You will need to upload a detailed budget and a budget narrative. So the budget is like, "We're going to hire an advocate, advocate at this salary times 36 months," for example. The narrative is where you have a chance to describe, "We're hiring this advocate because they are going to answer the service line and provide services to victims." That's kind of the idea. But again, if you read the sample budget, it provides a lot more of this information.

And then last, we have the memorandum of understanding. This is also scored, and this is where you have an agreement with your partners, and you're able to show us how you're collaborating with your partners. For this, you need to identify all of the partners, provide some history of how you have collaborated, including when and under what circumstances the collaborative relationship began and when each partner entered the relationship. Describe the roles and responsibilities each partner will assume to ensure the success of the project, demonstrate how the partnership can address the needs of underserved populations, and then state that each partner has reviewed the budget and is aware of the amount being requested.

And just as a reminder, as I said, each section of the application -- the narrative, the budget, and the MOU -- is reviewed and scored separately. So if there's some information that we need as part of the narrative, it cannot be in the MOU because we will not score it. And the same thing: whatever, read the application, the solicitation carefully and make sure that every piece of information that is specified for each section is in that section.

And I have another pause for questions here, and then I'm going to go into the submission information, so I'll wait just a second here in case anyone has any questions, but I don't see any in the chat right now.

SPEAKER: I don't see any, and I don't see any typing. I also don't see any...

MARNIE SHIELS: Yeah, not seeing typing is helpful. OK, so then I'm going to move on to the submission information and the process of how to submit an application.

The complete application package, including links to required forms, is available on grants.gov and on the OVW website, and all applications must be submitted first in grants.gov and then in JustGrants. There are different documents that are submitted in each, as I mentioned, this is a two-step process. The grants.gov, once you get registered, is very simple. There's something called the SF-424, which just has some basic information about the organization, how much money you're requesting, budget period, things like that. And then the SF-LLL, which is a lobbying certification form, basically. So you just submit those two things, and then your application will be moved into JustGrants. Then all the other things I talked about -- the abstract, the different surveys, the narrative, the budget, the MOU -- are all submitted in JustGrants.

And as I mentioned, we will not accept any applications after the JustGrants deadline, except for severe inclement weather or disaster. And so if that happens, read the solicitation. There is a process of how to request an exemption, but it is the exception and not the rule. As I mentioned, the grants.gov deadline is two days before the JustGrants deadline.

And I saw Amy did put in the chat the two different deadlines. You're welcome to submit the grants.gov piece right away if you think you might apply, just so you can get into JustGrants, because JustGrants is much harder. And there's no consequences if you submit in grants.gov and then decide later not to submit in JustGrants. Make sure you read the Prior to Application Submission section in the solicitation, and then, if you have not done so already, you will need to register with the system I mentioned before, called SAM, and then with grants.gov. Again, if you read the solicitation, there's a lot more information about how to register with these different systems.

So the submission process: Step one, you submit the required information for the SF-424, as I said, very basic information. And then step two -- oh, and the sorry, and the lobbying form, the SF-LLL -- you submit those two things in grants.gov. And then step two, you submit the full application, including attachments, in JustGrants. And that'll be it. And in order for it to count as

on time, you have to have the full application in JustGrants by the JustGrants deadline. And as a note, JustGrants functions better using a PC with either the Chrome or the Edge web browser.

So this slide just has some contact info. If you have technical difficulties with SAM, there's a website to go to. If you have technical difficulties with grants.gov, there's a website. And if you have technical difficulties with JustGrants, there's a website. And this information is also in the solicitation.

So here are some resources, and I'll leave that on the screen for you: just different websites, the companion guide which I mentioned that has information on things like the activities that may compromise resources for applicants, has some sample forms and things like that. Conference cost planning if you're planning on having any meetings or conferences as part of this, the open solicitation which you should already have, and then OVW YouTube channel. Well, I'll leave that there for you.

Yeah, OK, so I just see there's a note from Amy, who also suggests completing the grants.gov portion ASAP, and you do not have to apply, and it will allow you time to identify and remedy any problems, especially if you have not previously registered in SAM or JustGrants that way, or, I mean, in SAM or grants.gov that way. If you run into any problems, you'll have time to deal with those problems as well.

All right, some additional financial resources. There's some training for applicants, budget information, and the sample budget worksheet, some information on a video on creating a budget, the uniform guidance -- you do not need to read that, but our grantees do. All have to follow it. Some of these requirements I've been talking about come out of that uniform guidance, the DOJ financial guide, which is much more readable and is for our grantees on what financial requirements they need to follow. And then we have some contacts. There's a contact for the Grants Financial Management Division, and this is again in the solicitation as well for financial questions. There's grants.gov support and JustGrants technical support, both available.

And that is the end of the slideshow. And so that's kind of the -- that's the presentation. If you have any questions, please go ahead and put them in the chat.

AMY LODER: I don't see any typing. You did such a comprehensive, comprehensive job. OK, oh, thank you, you know. And I'll just remind everybody, if there are questions, you can send it to the mailbox as well. You want to drop that into the chat, Marnie?

MARNIE SHIELS: Yes, let me find it.

AMY LODER: Sorry about that.

MARNIE SHIELS: That is OK.

AMY LODER: Make sure that I have... and I just, I know I had it in here somewhere.

MARNIE SHIELS: I just, I'm pretty sure I know it, but I don't want to accidentally type the wrong thing.

AMY LODER: That's why I asked you to drop it in.

MARNIE SHIELS: I know I had it on slides. I'll get it in just a minute.

AMY LODER: Do we have access to these slides? We do not, but yes, since we don't have a registration -- actually, we did have a registration? You have one, right?

MARNIE SHIELS: Yes, there was registration.

AMY LODER: We will send these out.

MARNIE SHIELS: All right, I'm typing this so, but you know, I'm not going to type it in case I have it wrong. I'm pretty sure it's OVW.PreUSServiceLine@usdoj.gov, but use the link in the solicitation. It's the same thing you used to register for this webinar.

AMY LODER: All right, all set, well.Thank you, everybody.

MARNIE SHIELS: Yes, thank you.

AMY LODER: Thank you. I think we're done.