

DARYL FOX: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to today's webinar, "FY 2023 Rural and Small Department Violent Crime Reduction Program," hosted by the Bureau of Justice Assistance." At this time, it's my pleasure to introduce Juliana Palmer, Policy Advisor with BJA, to begin the presentation.

JULIANA PALMER: Thanks, Daryl. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us today to hear more about the current open funding opportunity available for small and rural departments seeking to reduce violent crime. My name is Juliana Palmer and I'm a Policy Advisor at the Bureau of Justice Assistance. I'm joined today by Ivette Ruiz, State Policy Advisor of BJA, who will be assisting with responding to questions that you may have for us today.

Before we get started, I wanted to share a brief agenda so you know what to expect during this call. Today, we will introduce OJP and BJA, the funding agency for this program, discuss the Rural and Small Department Violent Crime Reduction Program, review eligibility and application requirements, as well as application resources, and provide an opportunity at the end for questions.

So what is the Office of Justice Programs? OJP is one of three grant-making components of the Department of Justice, which provides funding, training, research, and statistics to the criminal justice community. Various programs within OJP include the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office for Victims of Crime, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking.

BJA's mission is to provide leadership and services in grant administration and criminal justice policy development to support state, local, and tribal justice strategies to achieve safer communities. BJA works with communities, governments, and nonprofit organizations to reduce crime, recidivism, and unnecessary confinement, and promote a safe and fair criminal justice system. We are led by director Karhlton F. Moore, who was appointed by President Biden in February 2022. You can find more information about BJA by visiting our website at www.bja.ojp.gov.

Many of the activities that we do here at BJA involve investing diverse funding streams to accomplish goals, researching, developing, and delivering what matters, whether through training or technical assistance, creating tools and products to build capacity and improve outcomes, and consulting, connecting, and convening with stakeholders and experts in a myriad of topics nationwide.

So we're going to go over the program here. So through the FY 2023 Rural and Small Department Violent Crime Reduction Program, BJA seeks to support small and rural agencies in their efforts to combat violent crime. This program will provide funding to small and/or rural agencies and/or prosecutors interested in implementing or improving the capacity of their organization around one or more critical elements found in the BJA *Violent Crime Reductions Operation Guide* or *Prosecutors' Guide to Reducing Violence and Building Safer Communities*. You can find each of these resources online and link in the solicitation.

Activities for this initiative include completing the *Violent Crime Reduction Operations Guide* online assessment tool, selecting one or more of the critical elements within the guide, which we'll go over shortly, to improve capacity as part of an overall violent crime reduction strategy, partnering with a researcher or subject matter expert to monitor the activities identified for the project.

As well as implementing programing and activities that reflect an enhanced capacity to prevent violent crime, deploying resources to meet the capacity enhancement goal, documenting the development and implementation of strategies to reduce the violent crime problem or problems identified in your application, tracking progress and outcomes, and other activities as outlined in the solicitation.

As mentioned, the *Violent Crime Reduction Operations Guide* is a key component of this initiative. And it's available online and link in the solicitation. The guide outlines critical elements that discuss important capabilities for any agency in its fight against violent crime, including the most essential overarching element, which is leadership. Law enforcement leaders and agencies can use this guide and its critical elements to assess their agency's capacity and identify additional actions to assist them in their fight against violent crime.

The guide outlines several critical elements which are essential components of crime-fighting strategies in a format that can assist agency executives in determining their respective capacity in each of these areas. Components include community engagement, partnerships, technology, analytics and intelligence, training and tactics, resources and sustainability, as well as accountability. The guide goes into each of these areas in-depth and provides agencies and leaders with examples of how to implement these components. So for the purposes of the solicitations, applicants will focus on one or more of these key areas, and we can provide the link to that assessment tool in the chat.

So, the guide also contains an assessment tool. The self-assessment tool helps agencies identify areas to increase violent crime reduction capacities and capability. As mentioned earlier, selected grantees through this program will have to complete the assessment upon receipt of the award and through their application, identify one or more of the critical elements to improve capacity as part of their overall violent crime reduction strategy.

Eligibility and application requirements. Eligibility is outlined in the solicitation, but this differs slightly from the previously funded BJA's Rural Violent Crime Initiative in that this solicitation is open to small law enforcement agencies and agencies serving rural communities to include prosecutors serving rural communities or small departments. For the purposes of this initiative, a small agency is any law enforcement agency with 250 or fewer sworn officers. A rural agency is, A, an agency serving any area or community, no part of which is within an area designated as a standard metropolitan statistical area by the Office of Management and Budget. Or, B, any agency serving one or more rural census tracts. And then a tribal agency is any federally recognized tribe within a designated law enforcement agency.

The maximum amount of funding available is \$300,000 per award. We anticipate making 36 awards under this initiative, with funding to begin on October 1st, 2023, with a performance period of 36 months. I did want to take a moment to share what some other agencies have utilized similar funding to accomplish. Many of these activities that I'm going to outline are still ongoing through an FY 2021 BJA Award.

Previous funding through this program or programs similar to it has been used to support efforts to combat various rural violent crime challenges, including gang, narcotics, and firearms-related crime, assaults, robberies, and sexual assault, child abuse and exploitation, homicides, kidnappings, as well as intimate partner violence. The next several slides will highlight some successes that rural law enforcement agencies have had utilizing funding through BJA with all of these efforts still ongoing.

So the first example that I want to highlight is the Vail, Colorado, Police Department working with the Eagle County District Attorney's Office and Eagle County Department of Health and Human Services, along with numerous other community partners, have launched the Mountain Safe Program, which services collaboration designed to reduce violent crime and victimization, especially among youth and the Spanish-speaking population.

The Ashland, Alabama, Police Department is seeking to create better responses to crime-challenged areas using problem-oriented policing and technology, such as pole

cameras and a mobile camera trailer. Ashland has used its mobile trailer recently to reduce violent criminal activity in one area by up to 60% over the course of a five-month period. Again, these efforts are still ongoing, so we anticipate additional data moving forward.

The Tamaqua Police Department in Pennsylvania is addressing the issue of sexual assault and related violent crime through a series of partner trainings and increased cross-sector collaboration. The scheduling of training opportunities for initiative partners is underway for much of 2023, and the site reports strong community interest in its work to reduce this violent crime.

And finally, the Comanche, Texas, Police Department seeks to reduce human and narcotics trafficking and child exploitation through the implementation of automated license plate readers and the use of forensic software. These license plate readers were strategically placed throughout various high-crime areas and have led to multiple seizures and confiscation of numerous narcotics, fentanyl pills, cocaine, and other drugs. The police department has also mined nearly 400 gigabytes of data for several cases to include murder, assault, and burglary.

So as you can see, a very wide range of efforts funded by BJA for rural law enforcement agencies in the past that are still ongoing, but showing signs of early success by agency that are seeking to address a variety of different violent crime issues in their area.

So a few things to keep in mind as you're working through your application. You must reference the *Violent Crime Reduction Operations Guide* or the *Prosecutors' Guide to Reducing Violence and Building Safer Communities* throughout the application as stated in the solicitation and on this webinar. Identifying one or more of those key areas to focus on and address violent crime in your jurisdiction is critical for this program. And the program timeline that you provide with your application must highlight and include major milestones and deliverables that you seek to utilize the funding for.

A couple of important dates to keep in mind. So the posting date of this solicitation was April 17th, 2023. We're having the solicitation webinar today, May 16th, and the Grants.gov deadline for this solicitation is June 13th, 2023, at 8:59 p.m. Eastern [Time] with the JustGrants deadline of June 20th, 2023, also at 8:59 p.m. Eastern [Time].

A few commonly asked questions that we receive include, "What should be in my application?" You should review the "Application and Submission Information" section of the solicitation, beginning on page 13. We do require a proposal abstract, narrative, budget worksheet, budget narrative, timeline, resumes and more. It's important to make

sure all of those components are included with your application. Another question we often receive is, "Can my organization propose to partner with other entities?" Yes. Partnering with other entities is allowable, but you must ensure that only one entity is submitting the application and assuming fiscal responsibility. We encourage you to identify those partner organizations within your application when possible. And especially if you're focusing on community engagement as a critical element for your violent crime reduction strategy, it would be great to see those partners identified throughout your application.

So we're going to move into some application resources that are available to support you throughout your process of applying for this federal funding opportunity. Located on the Department of Justice website is the OJP Grant Application Resource Guide, which addresses a variety of policies, statutes, and regulations that apply to most applicants. This includes information on items such as proposal abstract, budgets, and application attachments, all of which are required for this funding opportunity.

There is a lot of great information available online at justicegrants.usdoj.gov, which includes training resources and user support options for the JustGrants system.

For application assistance, whether through Grants.gov or JustGrants, there are several customer support hotlines and email and web support options available on the screen. For Grants.gov, customer service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with the exception on federal holidays. And on JustGrants, Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Eastern [Time] and Saturday, Sunday, and federal holidays, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

If you've not already done so, we encourage you to sign up for email updates from OJP. Updates include news releases, new grant opportunities and application tips, as well as the latest information on JustGrants and more. And of course, stay connected by following BJA on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube at DOJBJA. For information on funding opportunities, publications, and initiatives, you can visit BJA's website at www.bja.ojp.gov.

And this is going to be a really important slide. If you have additional questions that we don't get to today, or as you're working through your application, you should contact the OJP Response Center at grants@ncjrs.gov. You can call as well toll free at 800-851-3420. The hours of operation for the response center are 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. What happens is they route any questions to the appropriate policy or State Policy Advisor for the grant program. So again, if you have questions that either we don't get to today or that arise as you're working through your application, take

down this email and contact information and ensure that you can contact the OJP Response Center so we can get your questions answered.

As a reminder, all applications must be submitted via a two-step process, each with its own deadline. Step 1 is to submit an SF-424 and an SF-LLL at Grants.gov, by that June deadline, as well as the full application with attachment at JusticeGrants.usdoj.gov. You should note that submission deadline time is for both Grants.gov and JustGrants are now 8:59 p.m., not 11:59 p.m., as it was in previous years. The solicitation outlines all of the deadlines for this funding opportunity.

And finally, before we get to our Q&A portion of the webinar, we do want you to be aware of the available resources to support applicants with the Grants.gov and JustGrants application process. We don't want these systems to be a barrier to applying for this funding. So we will have this slide up throughout on the Q&A portion of the event just to ensure that you have access. For technical assistance, submitting those SF forms into Grants.gov, please see the contact information on the screen. And for your full application submission into JustGrants as well, the OJP Response Center, again, is on there for technical assistance regarding programmatic requirements.

If you have questions related to, for example, eligibility, program design, if you want to ensure that your design is incorporating the elements from the Violent Crime Reduction Guide appropriately, you can route all of that information and the inquiries through the OJP Response Center and they will ensure that they make it to the State Policy Advisor, Ivette, and myself, the Policy Advisor for prompt response. And with that, we will open it up to questions. Daryl?

DARYL FOX: Yes. Thank you. So we will be in the Q&A portion of the webinar now. I just want to remind everybody that the PowerPoint, the transcript, and recording for today will be posted to the BJA website. So at any point if you need to go back and reference what was discussed today, you'll be able to do so. And you'll receive a notice when and where to access those items. If you do have a question, far bottom right of your screen, three dots like QA send to all panelists, we'll cue those up. There's plenty of time left in today's presentation. So with that, Juliana, there's a question in the Q&A at this time.

JULIANA PALMER: Yes. So I see one question. The first is, "Are community colleges or universities that have campus police considered for this grant?" Ivette did respond to this. To see page 13 of solicitation, which reads, "State, local, and university or college law enforcement agencies must be certified by an independent credentialing body." As

long as you are serving a rural jurisdiction or area, you would be considered eligible for this program.

I do see another question in the chat. "With technology like GRE key, that's used for mobile device data extraction, geolocation, locating victim and suspects, and evidence gathering be allowable under the technology category?" As long as you can relate it back to that Violent Crime Reduction Guide and demonstrate the need for that in your jurisdiction or area and build out your violent crime reduction strategy around the utilization of that technology, that would be eligible. I see another question regarding the eligibility and definition of rural. For purposes of this solicitation, a rural agency is considered an agency serving any area or community, no part of which is within an area designated as a standard metropolitan statistical area by the Office of Management and Budget, or any agency serving one or more rural census tracts.

I see another question coming into the chat. "Can this program be used to supplement another active state-level violent crime grant in order to enhance the existing program? An example is a violent crime unit set up with state funds." Ivette, I want to see if you can respond to this and ensure that there wouldn't be any supplanting for those purposes.

IVETTE RUIZ: Juliana, I apologize. I was busy reading the other questions and I'm trying to look for the one you mentioned. Can you repeat the question, please?

JULIANA PALMER: Absolutely. The question is, "Can this program be used to supplement another active state-level violent crime grant in order to enhance the existing program? The example is a violent crime unit set up with state funds." And the question is, "Can this funding or federal funding be utilized to supplement those efforts to enhance the program?"

IVETTE RUIZ: Yeah. It would have to be an enhancement, a different area, like if it was part of a census tract that you had zeroed in on a different expansion or enhancement, meaning additional activities in a new area or different components that were not part of your original plan. So you would have to frame your proposal in that regard.

JULIANA PALMER: Thank you for that, Ivette.

IVETTE RUIZ: Uh-hmm.

JULIANA PALMER: I see another question in right now, it looks like it disappeared. "Would funding a victims advocate hired to serve several small departments be

considered?" We have funded victim services units and different efforts around that in the past through similar funding. For the purposes of this initiative, so long that it's tied to the Violent Crime Reduction Guide and connected to one of the critical elements. Again, those critical elements are community engagement, partnerships, technology, analytics and intelligence, training and tactics, resources and sustainability, and accountability, it would be allowable. For that particular purpose, you would want to ensure how utilizing a victims advocate would help to reduce violent crime in your jurisdiction and which critical element you would connect that to.

I do see another question. "What type of crime fighters conference is BJA looking for, inviting everyone to our county or virtual meeting or report? Just a little clarification on that." We can get additional information for that question to provide to applicants. The intent would not be to host every funding award to your jurisdiction with the amount of funding that's available, so. We'll get clarification for that and provide it to the attendees today.

IVETTE RUIZ: I see another question. I don't know if anybody has seen it. I see another question that's not been answered, and it says, "Can you elaborate on what a researcher subject matter expert would be?" And I think that that's on slide 13 of the presentation that Juliana made. It says that, "Anything in the area of community engagement, partnerships, technology, training, tactics, and accountability," so it would be a researcher subject matter expert in one of those areas, is that correct, Juliana?

JULIANA PALMER: Yes. And that can either be through a university or an independent researcher, essentially to assess the violent crime reduction efforts that your agency seeks to implement.

I see another question. "Can the funds be used to send prosecutors to training on how to effectively prosecute homicides?" Yes. Training is one of the critical elements, excuse me, in the guide, so, again, just ensuring that you're connecting it back to those key areas.

I see another question. "Are body cameras and servers allowed?" We have funded some body-worn cameras through this initiative, however, we do recommend that any agencies looking for body-worn cameras or servers to pursue BJA's body-worn camera funding opportunity that we have available. And I'm just going through to see if there are any questions that we may skipped over. Daryl, can you toggle to the slide with the OJP? And we're seeing if any more questions are coming in. Again, the screen that we have on right now, and Tammy was kind enough to put the information into the chat, strongly encourage you to copy and save that information at email grants@ncjrs.gov.

Any of the questions that you have today that you might need additional clarification on or information around as you're working through your application, just send it over to that. Let them know what solicitation you're inquiring about and they will route it to us specifically for response.

I do see another question. "Is it possible for one suggested component of the application to fall under several different critical elements?" Absolutely. There are often times where one crime reduction strategy might hit multiple strategies. There might be required for partnerships and training within one application. You can absolutely have something that crosses multiple [INAUDIBLE] categories. And usually we find that they do. So the more that you can tie it back to that guide and demonstrate your strategy and what you seek to accomplish and how it relates to those critical areas, the better.

And I see one more question. "Which agency was awarded funding for mobile pole trailer and pole cameras?" That was Ashland, Alabama. And that agency was funded through BJA FY 2021 Rural Violent Crime Reduction Initiative. A couple of additional questions have come in. "Would collaborative partnerships to address things like child abuse and drug-related violent crime have a better shot? And if this were the case, would an agency or the district attorney be a better applicant?" Collaborative partnerships are always a great model for an initiative, especially like this when you're looking to address very complex criminal issues in your jurisdiction. I can't say that one would be better than the other. Really, it's a matter of demonstrating the collaboration within your narrative, in your application and designating who is doing what. So you can have that partnership between the two agencies, but really being clear about what those roles will be would make for a stronger application.

And then I have one question. "Can a subject matter expert also be someone working at another agency?" So if you provide their resume and information to demonstrate that they're a subject matter expert in analysis and program evaluation, absolutely. That can be sufficient.

IVETTE RUIZ: There's another question, Juliana. "Does this solicitation come out each year or only every three years?"

JULIANA PALMER: That's a great question. So we have no guarantee that it's going to be yearly. So the first time I believe this was funded was in FY 2021. This is the second round of similar funding. Again, the eligibility is a little bit broader with this category than the previous one, but there's no definite that it will be funded next year or three years from now. It just really kind of depends on funding availability.

IVETTE RUIZ: There's a new question.

JULIANA PALMER: So I see a question in the Q&A, "We are trying to get ALPR. We don't have a university in our county, just a local college, any suggestions on other subject matter experts for that assessment portion?" Aaron, I would recommend that you go ahead and send an email to that grants@ncjrs.gov. And while you're doing that and they're routing it my way, I will look into that for you. Another question that we have, "Would the clerk of the district court be an eligible agency?" So this solicitation is limited to law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices. So courts are not eligible to be the primary applicant for this solicitation. They could be a partnering organization on an application. However, they would not be eligible for direct funding. All right. We'll give another minute or so for any additional questions that come in.

Again, you don't have to know all of your questions today, but if you have any, feel free to send them our way. And if they come as you are working on your application for this funding opportunity, please utilize at grants@ncjrs.gov email to route any questions that you might have. And then, Daryl, are we able to go back to the deadlines just for...thank you. So, again, this solicitation is open until June 13, 2023, for the Grants.gov deadline. June 20, 2023, at 8:59 p.m. is when you have to have your entire application package into JustGrants. It's really important that you meet these deadlines. If you have any questions or concerns or challenges as you're working to get into these systems, please notify the help desk as soon as you can. The sooner the better, to ensure any troubleshooting that might need to occur.

So I have a couple of other questions that are coming in. The first is, "Are funds awarded based comparatively on the existing violent crime rates in geographical areas or are they reviewed on preventative measures?" So the applications are reviewed through a pretty complex peer review process. It is not based specifically on violent crime rates in any given geographical area. Rather, based on the program design submitted to address whatever violent crime challenge is ongoing in the area. So it's not simply based on the crime rates.

And there's another question, "Would this grant be good to help with rehabilitation and to keep returning inmates out of jail?" So if you're able to connect that to violent crime reduction, potentially. However, there are a lot of other BJA funding opportunities that focus on reentry. But if this is a violent crime challenge that you have in your area with returning individuals to the community and you need to address that through violent crime reduction strategies, that would be something you could explore. But I would also encourage you to visit BJA's website and seek additional funding opportunities around reentry. All right. Looks like we're slowing down with the questions. Again, sharing some

of this information so you can save it and reach out to either of these support desks in the event that you have additional questions following this webinar. All right. Daryl, I think we might be nearing the end of the Q&A.

DARYL FOX: Great. Thanks so much. And just another reminder, these items will be posted to the BJA website. You'll receive an email when they are and where to access them, so you'll be able to go back and reference this material. So on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Assistance and our panelists, we want to thank you for joining today's webinar. This will end today's presentation.