MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Good afternoon, everybody. And welcome to today's webinar, "The Federal Funding Process, What's New and--What New and Seasoned Applicants Should Consider" hosted by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. So at this time, I would like to introduce you to the presenter today, Tara Kunkel with the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

TARA KUNKEL: Good afternoon and good morning to my West Coast colleagues on the phone. I'm really excited to be doing this particular session. Before I came to BJA as a Senior Policy Advisor, I spent 20 years in the field. And over my 20 years, I had the opportunity to write a lot of federal grants, and in particular, a lot of BJA grants. And I really struggled with demystifying what the feds were looking for, understanding how to read the solicitation. So, I'm excited to share my experiences with you both as a former practitioner being on the other side writing grants from the Office of Justice Programs, but also my experience now being in the federal system.

So, today's agenda, we are going to start out with an overview of the Office of Justice Programs and the Bureau of Justice Assistance in particular. Next, we're going to move to understanding the funding process. I think it's always important at the beginning to understand how everything works and fits together. So, we'll talk about that. Going to spend a little bit of time talking about how the grants are scored. I think that was the biggest thing I didn't really understand, and understanding how the grants are scored is critical to your success. We're going to talk about how to read a solicitation and to understand how it may or may not apply to the work that you are trying to do. We'll walk through the key steps to completing your application and then we'll have time at the end for questions and answers.

The learning objectives, we definitely want to educate perspective applicants on how this works. And my personal goal, by the time we're done, is to demystify this whole process for you so that you feel confident in your ability when you first see a solicitation to work through the process and submit your grant successfully. We'll, again go over a lot of the key steps that I think are completely critical to being successful in this endeavor. This is part--this is the third part of a four-part series. And as our moderator spoke to, the recordings on the previous two sessions will be available at a later date. And the fourth one coming up, although I do believe registration is filled, is coming up February 7th, and that recording will also be available.

So, let's start with "What is the Office of Justice Programs?" for those of you completely unfamiliar with our structure. I'm going to refer to it as OJP from now on. OJP provides grant funding, training, research, and statistics in the--to the criminal justice community. OJP is one of three grant-making components with the Department of Justice. The other two are the Office on Violence Against Women and the Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services. There are several agencies under the Office of Justice Programs. We'll be talking most about BJA today. But a lot of what we are going to say does apply to the other grant-making agencies that you see here along in the bottom of the organization chart.

So the Bureau of Justice Assistance, or BJA, as I'm going to refer to it throughout the webinar, helps to make American communities safer. And we do that in a lot of different ways. We do that through our grant-making, through training and technical assistance by assisting with policy development at the state, local, tribal government level and really looking to provide communities with cutting-edge tools and best practices to reduce violence and drug-related crime, and we want to support law enforcement and combat victimization. So if you're interested in just learning more about what BJA as a whole is, I'd invite you to visit our website or follow us on Facebook, and you'll get a sense, if you do that, of all of the work going on within BJA.

So let's start with The Life of a Grant. So this webinar is really going to focus on the two steps that are in the red box on the screen. So, it's from the beginning when the solicitation is posted, walking you through the application period, and how it works, and how to find those applications, and work through them. And then really the meat of today's presentation is going to focus on how to prepare your application. There are important steps after you submit your grant and are hopefully awarded your grant. They're shown on the slide, they will not be the focus of today's webinar, but we'd like to show you the life cycle of a grant, and acknowledge that there's a whole lot of steps after you're successful as well that are important to be mindful of. And it's important to think about those steps as you're writing your application and to understand how, for example, the impact of performance reporting should be something you consider when you're writing your application so that you have sufficient staff support in your project to comply with the monitoring and the performance reporting that you'll want to do if you're successful, and we want you to be successful.

Okay. So I--whenever I talk about grant writing, I like to begin with understanding, after I turn in my application, what is going to happen to it. And so I want to talk a little bit about the Peer Review Process. So BJA contracts with a variety of subject-matter experts out in the field, and their subject-matter expertise would vary depending on the focus of the particular grant. So, if we were doing a grant that was providing funding to prosecutors, we might seek a pool of prosecutors in the field as our subject-matter experts to review our grant. So, we contract with them and identify a pool of practitioners, just like you, who agree to review the applications and score them.

And what I like you to think about when you picture this, because I think this is important to your grant writing, is to remember that many of these subject-matter experts have done a full day at work, and they're coming home and doing their peer review at the end of their very long day, or on the weekend. So, it's important to think about how tired they might be and that you're not getting them when they're at their freshest, so this is something that they are doing largely out of a passion--while there is some pay it is largely out of passion for the field. And so you want to make it easy for the peer reviewers who are going through upwards of 50 pages, if not more, of your application with the attachments and really trying to give your application the fairest score possible. So I like to envision this practitioner reading my grants when I was writing them, I like to envision them being at home very tired reading the grants. And you can think about a few things that are important to think about, like making your information very clear to find. Using bold if there's a particular piece of information--strategically using bolding or underlining, or simplifying just the layout of your application so it's really easy for them to find what it is that they are looking for.

There are usually three peer reviewers assigned to each grant. That is our goal. And each one of those peer reviewers independently reads your application and looks at the attachments, and has a scoring matrix. Then we'll talk about where that matrix comes from, but they have a scoring matrix that they are going through and scoring each component of your application. The scores are then put together and then we arrive at a single score for your application. And then the applications and the scores are ranked and then they go to BJA staff for further review.

So, you might be wondering how might I know how my grant is going to be scored, and we tell you this in the solicitation. So, I provided a sample on the screen where you can see the red arrow is pointing to the words "15 percent." What that's conveying to you is that this first section of your narrative, where there are questions, that's 15% of your total score. So what do you do with that information? There's a page limit on--up--on this particular section of your grant. And I always try to think about making sure that the number of pages that I devoted to a particular topic is some way connected to the weight of the particular section of the application. So, that's how I use that information. But it also just gives you an overall sense of what BJA's focus is on the grant, and where they're really looking for the most content and the most clarity about what your project is.

And so those are just some tips and some thoughts about the peer review process. And again, I think the primary takeaway is to think about things like are you using language and acronyms that are only specific to your jurisdiction that might not be understandable to the peer review? Taking language and shorthand that you use in your locality and your state that perhaps doesn't translate across nationally because you don't know where your peer reviewers will be for, so really making it as easy as possible. I sometimes had family members who had no connection to our field read my applications when they were done because it gives you a sense of whether someone who isn't completely immersed in your world and your work gives you a sense of whether they understand what you're trying to articulate as clearly as possible. I think that's a good check if you have time also, is to have someone really just completely unfamiliar with the work that you do read your application just to make sure that it is clear.

The one other tip that I would give you is--I've given you a screenshot of what an application looks like. And if you never looked at an--I mean at what a solicitation looks like, if you've never looked at one, you may want to go and just Google like a BJA FY '18 application and take a look at this section and you'll see little bullet points. And I'll talk about this in a bit, but those bullet points are each questions. Sometimes the English majors in us believe that we would like to rearrange the questions, because they would flow better in our mind. So sometimes we want to take liberties with the order in which questions are asked, or the section in which a question is answered, I want to give you a little tip here. So again, the peer reviewers are scoring these really going down a list of the same bullet points, so resist the temptation to reorder your application, because it may make it very hard for the peer reviewers to locate what they are looking for if they're trying to score your application, so do try to resist the temptation. And if the solicitation appears redundant to you where it's asking the same question three times, it's really okay to answer the same question three times. Better off being safe than sorry if they advise, I always heard from my fellow grant writers. So, ignore whether the application flows and focus on being complete and comprehensive in the questions that are asked of you.

So, Reading the Solicitation. So, let's picture that you are getting ready for the grant season and you have found a solicitation that you think might fit a goal that you have in your community, the first thing to check, once you've printed it off or you're looking at it on the screen, is to make sure that your agency is eligible to apply. That's a threshold question you should start with. And sometimes you'll read it and unfortunately, your agency is not the eligible applicant for whatever reason, you might want to consider, could you partner with an agency that is eligible to apply and get your project done that way. There's a lot of partnering that goes on in successful BJA applications, so don't rule yourself out if you have a partner or can build a partnership that would allow you to pursue the solicitation or pursue the opportunity. The eligibility is always found on the first page of all of our solicitations, so you don't have to go looking very far for it if you just look at it on the front page and I've given you an example here at the screenshot.

The second thing before you dive into writing is to make sure that you have enough time to develop your application. The due date is also found on that front page, you don't have to go very far to figure that out. Some things that you have to factor in in deciding if you have enough time, if you need to take into account the time it takes to register to apply, there are some certifications, and some numbers, and some technical things that you'll have to have in place, and if you don't have those in place a few weeks out before the application due date, it's probably not likely that you would be able to get your application in on time. And applications that don't come in in time are not going to be accepted. So consider that. You can go ahead and register ahead of time.

So, if you think that you really want to apply for something this year, you can go ahead and start working on all of those things that you need to have in place, you could do that now and get those taken care of so you're ready to roll when it's released. There's also--in many of the solicitations, they require applications--I mean attachments. They might be things like letters of support from your partner agencies. For any of you all who have tried to go gather those letters of support or tried to do a memorandum of understanding, you realize that people can go on vacation, or be sick, or too busy, and you sometimes have to nag for those things, so attempting to do that in under 24 hours is probably not likely to happen, so you got to factor those things in. And honestly, I often used to start with the required attachments, particularly if they were letters of support because they could take a while in many communities to gather up. Some communities also do require their county board to approve their application or there's a complex approval process within their government structure. Take that timeline into consideration as well.

Okay. So next, you want to understand whether the--these ideas that you have about your project are things that can actually be funded with the solicitation and you can find all of that program-specific information in the Specifics section. And I'll go through things that are required and things that are optional. So if you read any BJA solicitation, you'll pretty quickly find that section and it will often convey that information very clearly. Sometimes, the solicitation you read it and you're unclear, and we'll talk about how you can ask questions and where you can gain additional information if you're unclear. But ideally, we convey pretty clearly to you what is allowable and what is not allowable. I will say, just because we don't say it doesn't mean we don't fund it, so we'll talk a little bit about how you can check on those things in a bit. So then you want to read the rest of the application in its entirety. But first, you want to make sure, am I eligible, do I have enough time, and is what I am thinking to do something that is allowable, and can I do--can I meet all of the requirements in terms of the project components to be successful. So that's where you want to start as you're reading the solicitation for the first time.

Next, you want to really give thought to whether your agency really has the capacity to do the work successfully, and sometimes the answer is that you can do parts of it, but you need to have a partner, or multiple partners, to meet all of the requirements for the project. And I will say that is not uncommon at all. I--the majority of applications that I see these days do have partners to successfully complete the project. And sometimes those partners are evaluators, sometimes those partners are another discipline, sometimes those partners are a trainer, so think about what you will need to be successful and if you don't have all the pieces, don't rule out applying so think about who your partners could be.

Sometimes it does take time to build partnerships, particularly if they're not agencies that are familiar to you, if you don't already have a standing working relationship with one another. So one tip I would give you is you can go to last year's solicitation, if it's a solicitation that we've had out in previous years and pull down last year's solicitation off the internet and give it a read. And if it looks like something you're interested in that you might need partners, it's okay, even before the solicitation comes out, to reach out to potential partners and talk about a hypothetical partnership if the solicitation doesn't change. Well, sometimes solicitations change and you'll have to factor that in, but having those initial conversations in advance really helps get you ahead of the game and helps you work through some key issues and be prepared for when that solicitation comes out to hit the ground running and develop your applications. So, I just want to acknowledge that these things really do take time and don't leave them to the--to the last minute.

Okay. So let's say that you've gotten all the way through your first read, you are convinced, you are eligible, you can do the work, you know whether you're going to partner or not, and you're ready to get writing. So, step one, read the application all over again. So it's easy to miss important little pieces in your first read because it's not familiar content to you and I like to make myself a timeline and a checklist, and I always try to think about the pieces that were going to take extra time, I mentioned whether it's a support before, partnerships definitely take time, things that have to be reviewed by people in your agency's hierarchy or outside of your hierarchy all are going to add time to the process. So, sitting down and developing a timeline and a checklist is important. We do provide a checklist at the--in the appendix of the BJA application as a guiding tool for you. But it's also good if you want to add additional detail or using--there are some other things that is in the--in the application checklist to build out your own and set timelines for yourself. Grant writing is not something you want to try to do in 24 hours' time. It would be, I would say, nearly impossible to do successfully, if not completely impossible, so you got to pace yourself and I know that for many of you all, you don't have the good fortune of having a grant writer, so this is something that you're doing in your "spare time" which really means often in the early mornings or late evenings of your actual job, if not at home at night. So I mean it's important to pace yourself. I mentioned before those registrations that are outside of your control, outside of our control that are in the hands of other agencies, they can take time. I'd encourage you to do them now if you're thinking about applying, but definitely do them first. And then I talked about the other things that I have listed on the slide and I've given you a screenshot of what an application checklist looks like so you can think about that.

Okay. Next. I would like--I would suggest you read the Review Criteria section carefully and really develop an outline for your writing and for the program narrative based on the questions you have to answer. So, I touched on this earlier, I'm going to say it again, and I may say it again at the end, the single biggest mistake applicants make, besides not being eligible to apply and missing the deadline, is not answering every question. So, I want to say that again, you need to make sure you answer every question. So if you look at the screenshot over on the right-hand of the slide, for those of you all that do have this up on your screen, I recognize some of you might be joining just by phone so you may want to go back and review what I'm talking about. Each one of those bullet points under all applicants where a bullet point says like, "Clearly identify the community, state, or region that is included." That--treat that as a standalone, single question, and make sure you answer it. And then there's, you know, several bullet points under that.

I would encourage you to think of every single bullet point as a question and treat it as such in your writing to make sure that you don't miss a single piece of what you need to articulate because I assure you, every one of those bullet points is exactly what the grant reviewers are looking at when they're reading your application and scoring your application. So, there's not a lot of mystery to this. They are looking and seeing whether you've provided the answer to the question. The peer reviewers are not so much looking for whether they agree with the answer that you give, but that you have given the answer and provided the information that is requested, so I think that that's really important. And then I also said earlier, and I'll say it again, don't decide to change the order of the questions that you answer because, again, really confuse a peer reviewer and make it difficult for them to find the information. You want to make it easy on the peer reviewers. They will be so delighted in reading your application if you just decided to stick with the flow.

Next. Okay. So here, I've given you a visual example of what was my approach when I was writing grants. I took every bullet point and I put it into Word, and I would take every--all--or remove the bullet points and turn them into red. And the red was a signal to me that it was a question and then I would literally type out the answer underneath the red text to everyone. And I would leave--and so one thing to know is that you're going to exceed the page limit if you do this because you've added in a bunch of extra content they're ultimately going to review, so don't freak out when you're past your number of pages that are allocated. Keep in mind you're going to erase what is written in red before you submit it. It's just a way for you to really ensure that you have not missed a single question. It's so tempting. And I think first grant--first-time grant writers really make this mistake often and just accidentally missing an aspect of a question. I often left the questions in red until after I passed it around and had a few people review it. It was just to check against my thinking about whether I had fully answered the question and that gave others something to kind of check against. And then once you're confident that every question has been answered, and that you've been thorough, and as complete as you can possibly be, go ahead and remove the red questions, because they're not something you need to leave in the application when you submit it. And you need to remove the red questions because you need to check your page count.

In this section, which is the Program Narrative section, there is always a page limit. And you cannot exceed it. So you want to make sure, once you removed all those red questions and you're pretty confident you haven't exceeded the page limit or that will be a problem in peer review. So if you've exceeded the page limit, what do you do? So you want to go through and see if you've just included some unnecessary language, and then you want to--if you have to start removing stuff, don't remove whole questions, because removing whole questions will absolutely lower your score. So, try to find a way to shorten your answers, simplify your answer. If you have some--something that can be moved to the appendix, you can contemplate that. But finding a way to make sure you fall within the page count is extremely important.

Okay. So we talked about the page limit. There's some other tricky things about formatting your program narrative that we always articulate in the solicitation. So, if you forget this, it will be in the instruction so don't stress too much about remembering this, but we always tell you whether the narrative has to be double-spaced or whether it can be single-spaced. Don't play the game of trying to lower your font size to get yourself within the page limit. We've all been there, done that. Times New Roman is preferred, it's not required. Sometimes you can get a little extra in by going 12 points with a different font. So if you're really right at the edge and kind of stressed, you can stay at the 12-point font though you could consider a different font as a way to get there. This particular sample has a page limit of 20 pages. They do vary by solicitation, so don't take what I'm saying as a solid rule applicable across all solicitations. You want to read the actual solicitation to make sure you're following the rules of that solicitation.

And then at the bottom or at the top, or anywhere--and bottom or top would be the two places you would do it. You want to number your pages in the format and style that are in the instructions. So, in this particular solicitation, the instructions were to use “1 of 20,” “2 of 20,” example. So I get common questions when we’re--when we--I have a solicitation open. A lot of people ask me, do I have to double-space tables? “I’ve decided to use the table, do I have to double-space that or can I single-space the table?” You can single-space the table. So, I think that is, like, one of my frequently asked questions, is do we have to double-space the table. Single-space it. And also no cheating on the margins. You have to have no less than 1-inch margins. So, that’s an important tip as well. There are some times in the solicitations some things that are asked for that it says you can put them as attachments. Take advantage of that.

The other question that I get is--I’m going to use this one as an example, the page limit was 20 pages. I’ve had people call and say, “I’m done writing my narrative and I have nine pages. Is this a problem?” And I would say 99% of the time you might have missed something. If in a 20-page solicitation you only have 9 pages, chances are you are missing something. I read a lot of solicitations and usually they come pretty close to the required page limit if they have all of the elements. Those of us that are writing the solicitations, we really think about what our page limit should be based on what we’re asking. So, you don’t have to hit, in this example, the 20-page mark perfectly. But if you’re at less than half the pages required, you may want to just go back and check and make sure that you didn’t miss whole sections that were required because there’s a pretty good probability that you did. So, I will offer you that tip as you think about what’s the perfect length. There’s not a perfect length, but too short is problematic. And, again, to say it again, going over the page limit is a problem. And so you cannot exceed the pages allowed. So the--there’s a variety of approaches they take when they do. We--people can stop simply reviewing them, it could get removed. So, depending on the peer reviewer, all sorts of things could happen. But you just don’t want to even have that experience, so follow the instructions.

Okay. So next, so let’s--you have your outline, you’ve maybe written your project narrative, maybe haven’t. The next is to think about your budget. Now I’m going to be honest and say that I typically wrote my budget first. But at a minimum, I would encourage you to think about writing it very early on in the process before you make a lot of commitment. I’ve seen a lot of communities sit down and they brought on partners, and they’re sitting down, thinking through their project. And the partners at the table think they are getting 80 percent of the funding that’s available. And in your head, you’re thinking they’re getting 5 percent of the funding. And that can be an awkward conversation to get to that difference. And so I like to write the budget early so all of the partners have a realistic expectation of the funding that they potentially will receive, and whether that funding is sufficient for them to do the components of the project that you’ve asked them to do. And if there’s any disagreement about that, it’s good to work that out from the very beginning. You know, grant writing is pretty stressful and you don’t want to ruin any kind of partnership over disagreements about expectations of funding or expectations of deliverables. You want to make sure that they’re really a match from the very beginning.

So, if it's possible, although it's not always possible, if you could have a rough sketch of the budget as you approach your partners, so you are going to approach your partners with the conversation already having a decent idea how much funding you might be able to give them, or even if you don't have how much funding you're willing to give them in your head, understanding what it is you're asking for them to do. Very hard for partners to understand how to give you an appropriate price if you're not clear in what you expect of them. And so you want to keep your partnerships and relationships in place, so thinking about that at the very, very beginning is important.

The other thing is that I would encourage you to make sure you really carefully read the application and understand if there's any required budget expenses. Most commonly, it's going to be required grantee meetings. And those are spelled out in the solicitation clearly. And you want to make sure that you've put those in your budget and that you've budgeted for them appropriately. Finally, it is not uncommon for a solicitation to put caps on expenses. Some of those caps are related to salaries and those salary caps are outlined in the financial guide. But sometimes, it just says things like, "No more than 20 percent of the grant funds may be used on X." So you need to make sure that you keep a running list of all of those rules that are spelled out in the solicitation around budget caps, and that you adhere to them, and you double, triple check your math to make sure that you haven't exceeded that. Otherwise, what will happen is one, the grant reviewers--or the peer reviewers, rather, will pick up on that and ding you on the scoring of your budget. But you'll also have a headache at the end if you are so fortunate as to receive funding, you're going to get bogged down for a while after your award in fixing your budget. And so it's good just to make sure that you have done all of those things.

I get a lot of questions in grant season about allowable expenses. Like can I lease a vehicle? Can I rehab a building? Can I pay overtime? A lot of those questions are answered in the DOJ Grants Financial Guide. So before you go anywhere else to answer those questions, or make assumptions about those expenses, take a look at the financial guide, the link is on the slide, and just look up your question, it's pretty user-friendly. You can typically search for your question and find it pretty quickly. But things like buildings, vehicles, overtime, things that are sometimes allowable, sometimes not, it's good to just check on those things. If you don't find the answer to your question and you are feeling like it might be a little bit of an unusual question, we'll talk about how you can submit that question and get it answered.

So, you are free to develop your own template, submit your budget and budget narrative, but we provide a template for you, BJA does. In the solicitation, we'll give you a link where you can find a single form that combines your budget and your budget narrative. And for my--in my opinion, there's not a lot of reason not to use the template that is provided, but know that you can create your own if you find that useful, or if you create a template that, for example, checks your math for you, you can do that. But you can use the narrative as well. Within the budget detail worksheet, there is a sample worksheet that's provided to you, that is a resource to you. I know that--I remember vividly the first grant that I wrote, I felt like the budget was the hardest thing to figure out. And I remember saying to my colleague, "I have absolutely no idea what is a reasonable budget expense for supplies, office supplies. No idea what is reasonable or what people consider to be allowable. Or I have no idea how much drug testing, you know, should be budgeted at." So I remember being a little bit mystified about that. If you have an experienced grant writer in your community or in your state that you can call upon, they can be a wonderful resource for saying, "This is the norm for budgeting on a desk. This is the norm for budgeting on supplies." All those things that--unless your particular job calls for this, you may have absolutely no idea what you should budget for. So find a friend in your community or a colleague that has done similar work or worked on a federal grant, and they can help you think through the things that might be unfamiliar to you.

Okay. So I've given you here an example of a budget narrative on the screen here because it is complicated to think about the format. And I--again, as I shared, this was something that was very complicated for me in the beginning. I wasn't sure how much detail I should put in place. So, on the screen here is an example of the level of detail. And what I--what I'm trying to convey in doing that is showing the calculation. So, we are looking for the level of detail where here, as an example, the telephone line item has one line at $50 per line in 12 months. Showing the peer reviewers your math and how you got to the cost is essential. So, always think about showing exactly the math that you use to get to the cost in your narrative. Also at the bottom if you're doing a combined template, you'll have to do a justification. And I've given you here a sense of the appropriate level of detail that you would want to have in your narrative. So, you're articulating. Okay. Here's the cost of the telephone. Why do you need a telephone?

And so, if you think about filling out the template, ask yourself the question on each line item, "Why do I need this?" And then write down a sentence or two, or three or four, about why that is essential to the operation of your program. And so, I've given you here some examples. Make sure that you do not have any items in your budget that is not referenced in your program narrative.

So, I've seen grant applications where the entire program narrative talked about amazing work that they were going to do, but they never mentioned why they needed three vans that they wanted to lease for their project. And so, you would get to the budget narrative and you would see like 50 percent of the budget was spent on these three vans, but nowhere in the actual program narrative did it explain the need for transportation. That's a problem because the peer reviewers are going to pick up on that and say, "I don't understand the connection between the budget items and the program--the proposed program." So, after you've done your budget, after you checked your math, after you checked that you've done the detail and that you've articulated why you need the thing, the item, make sure that you've cross-walked every item in your budget to your program narrative and articulated it. Now, you don't need to get crazy here. I think everyone understands that a telephone is important. You don't need to explain a telephone, but things that are--that are beyond that.

And here on the sample on the screen, I give an example of incentives. Talk about why the incentives are essential to the profile or if you've talked about transportation in some way, talk about the challenges your community faces with transportation. That will help the peer reviewers really understand each item and feel like it is justified. The other tip in the budget section is to articulate that you have approaches in the most cost-effective way. So, it's always good to throw in a few sentences like, "We contemplated, you know, approaching it this way, but found this approach to be the most cost-effective." The best example is if you are implementing a program that requires you to have some training. You may elect to bring a trainer into your community versus flying 20 people to another state for the training. It's good to explain that and to say, you know, "We are going to bring the trainer in at the cost of X for the week because it is more cost-effective than sending our 20 team members to the trainer's location." So, that's a good example of what I mean by explaining that you have taken the most cost-effective approach to your work.

Okay. So, I've said a lot of what is on the slide, but I want to just reiterate it again. There shouldn't be any expenses in your budget that aren't in your program narrative. Your personnel cost should relate to the key personnel. So, here's another example, if you are implementing a project where you are doing law enforcement and public health partnership. It makes sense to have staff that are on the law enforcement side and staff that are on the public health side for your partnership. You don't want to throw in two additional staff from a third agency that's never mentioned anywhere. The peer reviewers will be completely confused about why that expense is necessary and will likely score you down because it doesn't make sense. Always consider whether it is more cost-effective to contract out a service versus hiring brand new staff. Sometimes it is, sometimes it isn't, always important to consider.

And finally, I just want to--I said this in the beginning and I want to say this again, there are required performance measures for all of the programs. Sometimes, the collection of those performance measures is pretty minimal. Sometimes, it can be pretty intensive depending on the program, thinking through who will have the role of collecting those performance measures, and it's something that you actually have to answer in your application. So, you would have already had to think through that. But making sure that you have budgeted, to have that requirement fulfilled is important. The other thing I think people don't often think about when they're writing a grant is the amount of time it takes to deploy the program, to manage the program. If no one has that job and everybody does that job in addition to their 15 other duties, it's pretty easy for things to slip through the cracks. So, it is okay in most instances to request funding for a project director, even if it's part-time, or it can, in some instances and in some projects, be appropriate to ask for a full-time one to make sure that your project is successful. So, thinking through how to be successful at the end is essential as you're starting the process of writing your budget.

So, let's see. You have written your project narrative. You have gotten your budget done. Now, we talked about attachments at the beginning. Let's go back and talk about them again. It's very common for BJA applications and all of OJP applications to ask for a couple of attachments. So, we've talked a lot about letters of support. That's the first one that comes to mind. But there are often other things. Really frequently, we ask for a project timeline or a task timeline. And we sometimes use different words to explain this thing, but it is a standalone attachment that walks through the steps of implementing your project from start to finish and explains--asks you to explain step by step what you're going to do and the timeframes in which you're going to do it. And sometimes we also ask you to say who is going to be responsible for that task, whether it's a person or an organization. Understanding whose job it is to do each task is important. So, that's a separate attachment.

And there can often be three, four, five, six additional attachments required in the solicitation require--depending on the particular solicitation. So, making sure that you don't forget any of those is important because each one of those, one, it's part of the peer review process. But two, some of those are mandatory components of your project. And if you are missing them and they are mandatory, your application will be screened out at the very beginning and will never get to peer review because there is a check at the very beginning when the application is received to make sure that all of the mandatory minimum requirements are met. And so, sometimes those attachments unfortunately are mandatory and can get you bumped out of the whole process before you even get your beautiful hard work reviewed by the peer reviewers. So, don't forget any of them. We typically do list them in the applicant checklist. So, that's a good thing to go back and check. But, I don't even like to trust the applicant checklist. I like to also go back through the solicitation one last time on my own because I have trust issues and make sure that there wasn't anything that had to be attached that I somehow forgot to attach. Just give me a peace of mind that my hard work isn't going to be wasted because I didn't take the time to do that one last check on things.

I've used the term letters of support throughout my presentation, but we do often also allow a memorandum of understanding or agreement, which should just be a single piece of paper that would outline all of the roles and responsibilities of all the partner agencies within a single agreement. And it has the signatures of everybody on it at the end of the document. That is often an acceptable option to individual letters of support. And if you have already developed that, it can be a quicker way for getting that information in place rather than going around and trying to collect all of those individual letters. I also want to note that sometimes in some solicitations, there is a requirement that--and this would be applicable if you were a state--a local agency or a tribal agency. Sometimes there's a requirement that a state agency has to review your application. Check on that and make sure that that's not a requirement in your solicitation, or if it is, go ahead and get that done really early on or alert that person at the state level that your application will be coming, and make sure you have a process to get that piece done because that has definitely been a challenge for me in past applications, something I didn't always think through or pay attention to, needing that state letter of support if I was a county or a tribal entity.

So, we've gotten to the place where we have our narrative. We have our budget. We've checked everything. Our page limits are good. We are comfortable that we have answered every question. We've made sure that our budget tracks to our program narrative and there isn't any unexplained expenses. We have gotten through all of our attachments and we are sure that we have all of those. So, you believe that you're pretty close to submitting. The next thing that you'll want to do is pull everything together in front of you, print out the handy-dandy application checklist, and go through absolutely everything. It's really easy because you're usually tired at the end of the process. And again, often we're doing this as part of a broader job, make sure you haven't forgotten anything. And this checklist is just, again, that one last safety net to make sure that you haven't missed anything. And I've said this at the beginning and I'll say it again. That checklist is at the end of the solicitation, you can just print it out for yourself.

Next slide. Okay. So, Submitting Your Application. You are there. You are ready to submit. There are sometimes some rules about naming your file. If there are any rules that apply, you need to look at the 2019 Grant Applicant Resource Guide under "How to Apply" and it goes through all of the naming rules for files. I will tell you that unfortunately there was a time in my life where I wrote a grant, worked very hard on it. I messed up the file naming. There was an email that was sent back indicating the error and giving the individual who was allowed to respond for our agency giving that individual 24 hours to respond. That individual was on vacation and never saw the email and our application was rejected. So, I learned from my lesson, name your files and--by the rules that are clearly articulated in the 2019 Grant Applicant Resource Guide or if you're listening to this in future years, check that year's Applicant Resource Guide to make sure you've got that right.

And there is a deadline and we talked about where to find that deadline again, it's on the first page. But I always like to submit my application two days in advance. I have heard all sorts of crazy stories. Some of them are acts of Mother Nature like electrical storms, the internet's down in the office. I mean just everything seems to go wrong, to be quite honest, when it comes time to submitting applications. Your computer is frozen. You lose the file. Like, everything I think has happened. I think I have heard it all. A family member dies, your dog is sick. These things happen. So, give yourself cushion and try to send your application two days in advance. Sometimes when a lot of people are uploading their application it can slow their system down. This happens in very large solicitations where a lot of people are in that last day trying to submit things. It can take a while. And sometimes, you know, you do have a real-life--sometimes you got this, like, other thing you need to do in your other life and your application is still loading. Those are stressful things you just want to avoid in your life. If you ever live through one of them, you'll never want to live through it again. So, take it as my word of advice and wisdom to you, go ahead and just do it two days in advance. And then you--if you have any challenges, you will have the support of BJA resources and its contractors to assist you and support you and make it a little less stressful on you in those final moments.

So, you have submitted your application and you will have added your attachments as part of your submission. But again, the grants.gov has two categories of where you can upload your attachments. There's a place to upload mandatory attachments and there's a place to upload optional attachments. And OJP--and the system allows and receives files attached in both categories. Do not embed mandatory attachments with another file. That's really important to think about. So, there are some really specific instructions about the Add Attachment button they want to just go over that and you will likely honestly forget this, between now and when you're doing this. So, remember that this is here. And reflect back on it and you can pull this back up while you're doing this as a handy guide to remind you. So, all applicants have to use the Add Attachment button to attach a file to an application. You do not want to click on the paperclip icon to attach the files. That action will not attach the files to the application. And then after adding an attachment, you want to select the View Attachment button to confirm that you actually attached the correct file. I mean, you can just imagine and I have seen this. I have seen where people have uploaded an earlier draft that has writing all over it or it's only half done, and those things can be super stressful. So, just, you know, take that extra second and view what you uploaded to make sure it was in fact the thing that you meant to upload and it was the final version. If you find out that you made an error, there is a way, there is a button that says Delete Attachment. It's pretty intuitive. So, delete that one and go ahead and start the process back over. Upload that correct file and you are good to go.

Next slide. Okay. An application can be checked for errors via the Check Application button on the Forms tab of the Manage Workspace page. And again, we're getting down into, like, the super-detailed weeds of the process. This is really--we're talking about this now so that you have this as a resource. Later on, when you have this issue, you can come back to this. Give it a second to carry through and remember all of it. But an application can be checked for errors via the Check Application button on the Forms. That button is active if the set of forms in the workspace match those required. If you receive any error messages after clicking that Check Application button, you want to go and refer to the Cross-Form Errors help article for detailed information about the validation error. The chances are, in the heat of the moment, you're going to be really stressed in not remembering any of this and not even remember that the resources are there. So, do remember that you do have a variety of resources, we'll talk about them in a moment. We're there to assist you when you're panicking and not remembering how to fix these things and not understanding how to deal with these errors because basically, you know, it's pretty intimidating the first time. So, remember that this is here if you need to cross--check it later on and then we'll talk about some other ways if you have technical problems that you think is from the system.

Next slide. So, you, in fact, perhaps will encounter an unforeseen technical error. So, if that happens and the experiences with grants.gov and--it's beyond your control. Like, literally, all the power is out in your state because a, you know, a hurricane came through and all your power lines are down, those kinds of errors that happen and they're unforeseen. It's not that you didn't plan, not that your partner didn't turn in their letter of support but, like, literally it was unforeseen, like weather or an act of nature. You want to go ahead and contact the National Criminal Justice Reference Center [Service] Response Center and we've given you the email address here. This is in the solicitations also, so you have to remember this email address. You need to do that within 24 hours of the application deadline. And we understand, like, you may not be able to send the email because the reason you couldn't submit your application was you don’t have the internet, so we don’t think, like, you can do it immediately but within 24 hours, you do need to contact them and request approval to submit your application after the deadline. It does come up, and definitely there are acts of nature that interfere and then there are accidents and misplanning by applicants, those are not acceptable reasons. So, consider that and plan ahead. But sometimes, things do come up. And you’ll want to have this handy and understand that it is there. And then we do have a resource guide if you’re struggling with how to reply and you’re not remembering anything I’ve said because you wouldn’t, about all the nuances about attaching things, there is information in the Application Resource Guide that talks about doing all of those important things they’re having problems or having those unforeseen technical issues.

Next slide. Okay. So, say your issue was not technical in nature but you still are back with “I don’t understand if I can do this thing with the grant. I’m unsure if this is an allowable expense. I’m unsure if I’m on the right track with my idea, if my idea fits with what they’re going for.” There’s a couple of resources available to you. Almost--I think actually all solicitations, we host a applicant webinar specific to that solicitation. But first advice I would give you is to attend the applicant webinar live if you can attend because that’s where you can ask questions. If you just missed it, if you didn’t find out about the solicitation until after the webinar was hosted, or you had a meeting you just couldn’t miss that day, those recordings and the transcripts are available from those applicant webinars. So, you would want to get ahold of that. Take the time to actually listen to it and read it. And then also review any Frequently Asked Questions that we have put out after the webinar to clarify questions. Because sometimes if applicants are asking us the same question over and over, we almost always put out an answer to it at some sort of Frequently Asked Question thing because we want to be as clear as possible and we don’t want to answer the same question a hundred times, so we often put out the Frequently Asked Questions to clarify, you know, the answer so we can make that available to you.

Again, your question may be more technical in nature, things like, “I don’t remember [INDISTINCT] that I can double-space the table or not.” For those kinds of technical questions, you can contact grants.gov and request assistance. Those contact information--all of that is available usually on the first two to three pages of the solicitation, so always know that that resource is there. People do use that resource. Yes, we really do respond to the questions that are asked. It’s our goal. And I know the goal of everyone supporting the grant process is to get you the information that you need to be successful.

Next slide. And we’re almost to the end and I’m going to get into questions in a moment. So, Resources for Funding Opportunities. We’ve covered this in the first webinar. If you didn’t have a chance to listen to the first webinar, you might want to go back and listen to it because we talked a lot about how to find the grant. But I want to highlight a couple of things for you. So, our website, bja.gov, does list all of the funding opportunities and also gives you information about the initiatives that we have underway. You can learn more about how a program has been operated in past years if the program has been operating for a number of years. That’s just one way you can find funding opportunities.

We do have an Applicant Resource Guide that is up to date for 2019 and ready for you to take a look at. And then, I think it's important if you aren't familiar with the types of programs that BJA typically offers. They are--there are a lot of diverse grant programs. So, if you just want a big picture overview of all of these opportunities, we do have a program plan for 2019, and that program plan is going to go through all of the opportunities which means all of the solicitations that BJA intends to release in the 2019 grant season. The majority have not been released yet so it's a great time for you to be listening to this webinar and planning ahead, and knowing what is in that program plan can help you plan ahead and see what it is that might interest you. So, one, you can be on a lookout for it and, two, if it's not a new program, you can go ahead and download the FY 2018 application to get a sense of what the solicitation requires. I wouldn't recommend you start writing based on that, you definitely want to make sure you're writing to the most up-to-date solicitation. But at least it gives you a feel for how the program operates and the types of things we have traditionally funded but always check for the most recent solicitation as you're starting to do your grant writing.

Okay. And I would encourage you, like, even as you leave the webinar today, to go ahead and make sure that you have looked at the program plan because that is going to be your best friend, until the solicitations really start flowing out in mass. So, there's a couple other resources I want to highlight for you as we wrap up the part where I'm talking at you before we get to questions and answers.

Grants.gov covers all of the federal agencies. Grants.gov is not specific to BJA or OJP, it does have all of the opportunities available from all the grant-making federal agencies. Sometimes they can be a little overwhelming but you can go into grants.gov, sign up, and you can select keywords or key phrases, or particular areas or particular agencies that really seem to fit with the mission of your agency or the kinds of things they're wanting to fund, and you will get email alerts when items that are matching your areas of interest or matching the agency you indicated, you'll get those alerts when they come out. So, again, it can be a little overwhelming because when you start to think about all of the federal government, that's a lot of grants. And I know, I look at the opportunities out there and some of them are so scientific or so complex there've been areas I've never heard of before. So, make sure you kind of use that keyword search so you don't find yourself completely overwhelmed. But remember, you can also--if you're more interested in BJA, you can go to our website and set yourself a reminder to check every Monday the BJA website and check out what was released in the last week. And then, we'll talk about some resources that you can even get faster updates and when things are released in a moment.

So, NCJRS, I'm using an acronym, it's the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, does link also to all the current OJP funding opportunities. You can subscribe and get email notifications of all the new opportunities. So that will get you an email almost immediately when the solicitation is released. So, having that subscription set up often gives you a leg up. We really in some ways, as much as anything that is a timing game, knowing about the solicitation as soon as it's released gives you a leg up because I don't think I've said this, but most solicitations are only out on the streets or open for a

45-day period. So, you know, we talked about the timeline before but 45 days goes by really quickly and that's 45 days if you learn about the opportunity on the first day it's released. It's not uncommon to hear about it more at the 30-day mark and then you have that challenge there because you're already behind.

Finally, the National Institute of Justice or NIJ's CrimeSolutions.gov does give you a clearinghouse of programs and practices that have been rated as effective. So, you may only be at the stage where you know you have a particular problem. Like, say you have issues with human trafficking in your community. And you know that you want to address human trafficking but you're not sure of the latest research about human trafficking. You can go to CrimeSolutions.gov and see if there's any programs, and there sometimes are and there sometimes aren't, but you can always check and see like are there any effective programs that have been studied to be particularly effective in this area. So, I'll give one example that is--depending on what it is that is your problem, you can check CrimeSolutions.gov and see if something's has been as effective. Next slide.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Before we move to the next slide, I'm going to do--I'm just filling a little bit of space. We're having some technical problems. Another way to stay connected and on top of funding opportunities that are released is when you go to National Criminal Justice Reference Service, if you subscribe and register with them, you can select as an option, their funding newsletter. That newsletter comes out every Friday and it's emailed to you. That newsletter will announce new funding opportunities that are offered not only by BJA but also the other agencies within the Office of Justice Programs. In addition, anybody that registered for these emails or these webinars, or anybody in general, we're also going to post and notify you that the recordings and transcripts have been posted to the BJA website. So, if you're signed up to receive that funding newsletter you'll also get notice that those items have been posted. So, at this time then, we can move on in our presentation.

TARA KUNKEL: Thank you so much. That's a great tip. So, I mentioned the program plan earlier, but this is already out and it tells you absolutely every opportunity or solicitation that is going to be released within Office of Justice Programs in this grant season. And that plan provides a summary detail of the opportunities and which agency is expected to release opportunities in that area in the current fiscal year. You know, we've talked a lot about BJA in this particular webinar, but some of our sister agencies that are part of the Office of Justice Programs offer similar or companion programs that might be relevant to the work that you're doing. This program plan will let you cross-walk all of your areas of interest and then we match them to the particular agency. And again, all of that is just to give you a leg up and know where you're headed so you can start your work now organizing your grant writing.

Next slide. So, social media is critical and can also give you extremely timely information about when something has been released or when we posted something. So, we've given you here, in addition to our website one last time and the NCJRS website one last time, we've also given you the links for Facebook and for Twitter so you can follow us and we will put posts or tweets when solicitations have been released, so that's yet another way that you can be really on top of a solicitation when it comes out. We talked also on this slide about signing up for the biweekly JUSTINFO newsletter, which also will give the funding news alerts which I think has been mentioned previously. So, I believe now we're at the fun part of the webinar where I get to stop talking at you and really take some time and address the questions that have come up throughout the webinar. So, I'm going to turn to my colleagues who are going to help post the questions that have been asked and I will do my best to answer them. When I get stumped in any way, I may call upon some colleagues or, worst-case scenario, we'll get back to you.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Before we begin questions, I'm going to go over a couple of things that I mentioned at the very beginning of the webinar but--because I know some people had joined on a little later. The recording to this webinar, a transcript, and the PowerPoint slide will all be posted to the BJA website in approximately 10 business days. And we are doing four webinars pretty much back-to-back within two weeks. So, there could be a delay in getting those posted within that 10-day timeframe. But again, in about 10 business days, in that clock, we'll pretty much start to put--moving tomorrow, not today. So, 10 days from tomorrow. As I mentioned a little bit ago, too, we are having some technical difficulties and we apologize if there are delays or there are long pauses in between. We're trying to get things moving on this and so we just would ask you for your patience. We are going to address your questions as quickly as possible but, again, just please understand if there's a little bit of a delay or if we have to mute ourselves, that's why we're doing it. So, without any further ado, we will hit on the questions, and I'm trying to answer them as they came in. So the first question is "On several occasions, my agency's proposal has received glowing comments from two reviewers. But the third reviewer seems to have a bias against our particular type of program plan. Is there any effort to make--is there any effort made to even out this kind of scoring?"

TARA KUNKEL: Yeah. So, that is a good question. And it can be challenging, right? If you put three people in a room and ask them any question, they may have some differences in how they perceive information. So, that is a challenge. And so we do take that into account. Especially when a single reviewer's score is so significantly different than the other two, we do consider that. So, you referenced comments--I'm going to--I'm going to take it as a two-part question and say, some of your scores can be the same, but the comments seem to send mixed messages, and some of that is just differences in perspective, differences of personality sort of human nature that we react to different things or our past experiences have us pick up on certain things in a--in different ways than someone else. So there's differences in comments, but there's also differences in scores, but we really are focusing on less so than the comments as the scores. And again, when there is a score that looks so disproportionately different than the other two scores, it is something we definitely take a look at. We also review the performance of our peer reviewers each year at the end of the process that we do. Look at things like the scores that are out of line or out of sync with others or seem to be off in some way, those things are taken into consideration when we're rating the peer reviewers. And we use that to consider whether we want to use that peer reviewer in the--in the future. So definitely hear you on that, hopefully that explains a little bit, the comments themselves, they're not something that goes to whether your grant is awarded or not, but of course, we are taking a look at and considering as we go through the process.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: We are previously advised, the community initiative--incentive, excuse me, community incentives were not committed, but that we could pay stipend for community member's time, if in the budget, can we pay for incentive?

TARA KUNKEL: Yeah, that's a great question, and I will say this does vary by solicitation. So there's not a single answer I think that I can give you, I would encourage you, one, to really read what that particular solicitation says about the matter, if the solicitation is silent on it, like, it doesn't have anything in there, one way or the other, and you've looked at the financial guide, and the financial guide itself doesn't answer the question. Then if I still had questions that I'm still unclear, I would go ahead and submit that question, as far--to the help desk, and let somebody get back to you on that because, you know, it can be unclear, but first, check the solicitation because they do vary by solicitation. If you have an experience with one grant program and then you go to write a different type of grant, don't take your previous experience into the next program, you do need to think about each solicitation as being standalone with its own set of rules, and its own perspective on things. That's because Congress in its appropriation sometimes has very specific perspectives and allowable expenses, so keep all of that in mind, and factor that in as you are--as you are going through the process. But worst case scenario, if you're really unclear, submit that question about that particular solicitation and get your answer and--your question answered that way.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: When writing a letter of commitment or support as a collaborate--collaborative agency, do we address it to the funding agency or the main applicant?

TARA KUNKEL: Yeah, that's really confusing, there's not a set answer, it's okay, if you--if you don't get it right, your application isn't going to be scored any differently. Most people do--address their letter to the director of BJA, I would say that that is the most common approach, is to just put the director's name and you can--you can look that up on our website, or if you don't even want to go to the trouble of looking up his name, you can just put the generic--Bureau of Justice Assistance and generic address. The other thing I do see people do is mailing in their letters of support, you don't need to mail in your letters of support, it's just paper for us, everything for us that is scored needs to be uploaded in the system, so I remember being a little bit puzzled the first time whether I should actually mail it. Don't mail it. Upload it in the system, but the address, just go ahead and put Bureau of Justice Assistance, and then our address, or if you really want to get fancy the director's name, but if you forget my answer to this and mess it up, that's okay too, we'll take it regardless of how it's addressed, and we're looking more at the content.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: When you say do not embed mandatory attachments within another file, does this mean that mandatory and optional attachments should be submitted as a separate document?

TARA KUNKEL: Yeah, so the best example I can give and I will ask my colleagues in the room if they have other experiences, if the time task plan is an attachment. I think people put the time task plan in the program narrative. We really want the time task plan as like a standalone attachment that's mandatory as a single file that contains nothing but your actual task plan. So that's the example that we--I would give to try to clarify that. But again, to get at the optional and mandatory piece again, the task plan is almost always mandatory, but you may have this amazing report that you want to attach as an optional attachment, or we said something in the solicitation like you can submit something, put that in the optional. All mandatory attachments need to be a standalone file in the mandatory--uploaded in the mandatory section, not accidentally or purposely embedded in any other file.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Do reviewers want to see literature cited to justify the selection of specific interventions, programs, components, etc., providing full citations can be challenging to include given the page length restriction.

TARA KUNKEL: So that's an excellent question, and this varies by federal agencies so I'll--I will say that--I'm going to answer the question specific to BJA, but I really want to emphasize here that if you were writing an NIJ grant, which is a more scientific research based agency, the answer you might want to consider might be different for them, but in a typical BJA grant, we are not looking for your literature review. What we have typically said is--it's something along the lines of describe the program components and how they are evidence-based. We're not looking for a literature review. We are looking for you to say something more akin to multiple scientific studies that found that medication-assisted treatment is an effective intervention for opioid--for individuals with opioid use disorders. We don't need the 10 citations you'd like to give us. If you feel compelled to offer citations, like perhaps, you are talking about a vendor's product, and you feel the need or would like to cite information about that vendor, and it becomes important to lean to that, that is something you can do that you could put your footnotes or your endnotes as a separate attachment in the optional attachment area, and that is one way to handle it. But we are definitely not in under any circumstances looking for a full scale lit review on anything because you are completely correct, people not have enough pages, but--to do that in an effective way, and I would not encourage you to approach it that way. But consider again whether you're writing for BJA or for example NIJ, which you might want to take a different approach on.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Can we explain minor budget line items in the budget narrative instead of using the process--the precious space in the program narrative?

TARA KUNKEL: Yeah, so I think I gave the example earlier, it's not necessary to talk about why a telephone is necessary or why you need a desk. You don't need to--I don't want to overemphasize explaining everything. We do understand that office equipment is necessary, and it's not necessary to talk about that in the program narrative. So that's a good question--good clarifying question, so consider, you know, is it something that everyone would understand you absolutely need? Or is it something that is really more particular and maybe it's something that you really want the grant reviewers to explain why you want to fund it. Office equipment is one that I would definitely not feel the need to explain in the program narrative. Travel expenses, you know, you likely--if BJA had said, you need to budget for two mandatory national meetings a year, you can make reference to it in your program narrative. But BJA understands why it's in your budget because they mandated it, so you don't need to take up space for that. Pretty much, most everything else, I would definitely try if you can to incorporate it, better safe than sorry, but I've given you some examples that are kind of more common and obvious and don't need to be explained.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: I'm going to address these next two questions, one was about printing the presentation once complete, if you're referring to today's presentation, I don't believe you'll be able to print out the presentation from the webinar, but again, the PowerPoint slides will be posted to the BJA website. With regards to the presentation from January 28th, again, that presentation, the recording, the transcript, and the PowerPoint slides will be posted to the BJA website, hopefully next week. There have been times when an applicant--application asks for a completed MOU, but the bureaucracy of our jurisdiction doesn't allow signature within four to six weeks, which is usually the lead time we have for BJA opportunities. What can we do if the MOU is required?

TARA KUNKEL: Yeah, that's a--that's a fantastic question. So it sounds like you are very experienced and know that this is going to be an issue from the very beginning. What I would do is to be a part of the applicant webinar, and ask it in the applicant webinar if you happen to be prepared enough that you didn't miss the applicant webinar. If I missed the applicant webinar and the solicitation gave me no other alternative, it just said it had to be an MOU and not letters of support, I will go ahead and submit that question as a technical question and let it go to the policy officer who is running that particular solicitation and let them give you some guidance that is unique to your situation. As a general rule, most communities are able to do it, but I definitely understand, the other thing, if I were in your shoes, and you know that this has come up a lot. Is--can you begin drafting it now and have it, like--and you know you're going to apply for a particular program, it requires that and doesn't offer any other option, can you go ahead and start developing it now before the solicitation is out? And go ahead and, like turn it in the second the solicitation is out and you make sure that you have all of the pieces in it, go ahead and turn it in now. I know that that's ambitious, it requires a lot of planning. I always feel for communities that have made it so difficult, you know, the processes, and it just happened, yes, I feel for you, but those are--those are my tips, having been in your shoes, but always--worst case scenario, if you're really struggling to comply with something, reach out and ask the question and let somebody get back to you about your particular situation because things do come up.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Regarding the budget narrative, during the last fiscal year, our piece indicated that we should use the OJP Excel form, but can you please confirm that this is not required and grantees can use their own formats as long as they contain the required information?

TARA KUNKEL: So I'm going to correct myself here and say that if the solicitation says you must, you must. So, don't go and say, "But Tara said, I could do." The solicitation is always going to tell you. So, I don't want to give you bad advice. I don't want to give you advice that's not specific to your solicitation and because it can change. Please, please, please read the solicitation you are applying for and follow their instructions. An Applicant Resource Guide that we referenced a few times throughout this presentation also answers this question, so, things do change from year to year. We're not always up to speed on those changes. This is hard being here on the inside. We might miss something that is new in a particular year. So, the Applicant Resource Guide is your best friend until the solicitation comes out and those two combined resources will give you the answer to this question. Follow the instructions they've given you. Next question.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: If the grant states that "no current position can be funded" and we have a position that is funded by another grant that will be up within a few months, can you put this position in the grant?

TARA KUNKEL: Yeah. So I think the example that you are giving, if the solicitation says--we use the word, supplant, often as the word that we use to talk about not replacing one, you know, funding source with another, so, supplanting is the word you'll come across as you read the instructions. We say you can't supplant positions, so, in other words, you can't write a grant to fund a position that's already funded. But the example that you have given suggests that the position that is presently funded will not at the time of the grant award, have any funding attached to it, and if that is the scenario that you are contemplating, you would be allowed to request funding for the position because at the time of the award, which you could consider to be October 1, that's what--that's how we think about it. If on October 1 of the award year, that position is definitely, certainly, most definitely, not going to have funding, then that is a scenario where you could request funding.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: What is the reason for allowing only 45 days to respond to solicitations, especially considering that so many organizations are small and do not have dedicated grant writing staff?

TARA KUNKEL: Yeah. So 45 days is common, some are 60 days. I don't see a lot past 60 days. And some of it is really set by the nature of how we get our budget. So we are presently, I'll just give you a real world example. It's February 5th, and presently we do not have a budget for the coming year. And sometimes for a variety of reasons or, you know, the furlough that's occurred for any number of things that happened, solicitations sometimes don't get released until the spring. So if a solicitation is released, for example, I'm just going to make up a date if the solicitation isn't released until the end of

March and say we allow two months, so, that's March--so April and May are gone. And, so, now it is June. From June to no later than an optimally September 1, we have to get through peer review and sometimes that can take a very, very long time. We have to get the peer review scores back and we have to then make the funding decisions. There's a variety of people who review the funding decisions and sign off on them, that process takes a while. Then, there is an entire financial review done by other components of the agency to make sure that your expenses are permissible and that everything is in order and legally, we haven't messed up anything, and all of that takes a process and we really strive and sometimes have to make awards by September 30th. And so, all of that is a very long explanation to say that the dates in which we get our funding, and the ways and the processes that are in place to review a fair and--to create a fair and impartial competitive cycle, all lead to these 45 to 60-day windows. I absolutely, having been on the other side, feel the stress there, the best advice I would give you particularly if it's not a new solicitation is to go back to last year's solicitation and get started ahead of time. I always did, I mean, yes, we do change solicitations, usually not substantially, so that your time isn't wasted. So if you have your eye on something, it's okay to go ahead and get started. I mean, I wouldn't necessarily write my whole program narrative, but all those pieces around partnerships, and getting an idea of the budget, and going ahead and starting on my attachments and securing all of that, making sure my registrations are in place, for sure, all things that you as a good, strong community that's competitive is doing now before the solicitations come out. But, I respect the question and that challenges inherent in what it's like to be out in the field without grant writers. I would--did not have them myself and so, I understand the nature of the question and why. So hopefully, that explains the background.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Will this year's grants be more focused on start-up drug courts or improving existing drugs courts?

TARA KUNKEL: So we are not able to disclose any information about solicitations that have not been released. So unfortunately, I can't answer that question. I would take a look at the program guide. It will give you enough of an indication hopefully about the emphasis of the program in 2019. So take a look at that 2019 program guide and hopefully will answer your questions, but really specific questions beyond that, we're not able to answer until the solicitation is released.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: The DB solicitation summary data sheet lists response one through seven, for example, should my responses be--numbered one through seven? I know you said to make the peer reviewers' job easy.

TARA KUNKEL: Yeah. So what--if you have the space, I think, that's an excellent strategy. Sometimes you are at your page limit and it's just like impossible to do, but if you have the "real estate" in your writing to use subheadings and beautiful little ways of underlining and italicizing, and making it easier for the grant reviewer, they definitely appreciate it. And sometimes it's helping you make sure you didn't miss something, but also helps them find what you are trying to convey. So I think it's not a bad idea if you have the space. Not mandatory by any stretch, these are just, sort of, tips you learn along the way, especially if you have ever been a grant reviewer. And I will say also, if you've never been a peer reviewer, we are always looking for peer reviewers and there's information on becoming a peer reviewer I believe on our website and it certainly--if you're interested in that and you can't find the information about that, follow up after the webinar. But I find one of the most helpful ways of learning how to write grants is to kind of--to be a peer reviewer and see the process on the other side, it gives you a sense of how other communities are approaching grant writing. I know I learned a lot about a display and, like, what irritated me as a grant--as a peer reviewer and what helps me as a peer reviewer. It will make you a stronger grant writer--grant writer in the end if you are a peer reviewer also, so, keep that in mind as a tip as well.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: How do we get comments and scores from the three peer reviewers to learn more for future grants?

TARA KUNKEL: So we combine all of the peer review comments into a single document. We don't provide individual peer review comments. They're just all combined. And that's at least for the privacy, you know, and integrity of the process and, you know, you can imagine if you were a peer reviewer why you might want your comments combined with others. Sometimes, you know, it's just awkward, right? So you can't get individual ones but you will, as a matter of course, we do email the compiled comments at the end of the process, sometimes it does take a bit of time and it can be sometimes 60 days after October 1. So, after awards are made, it can be 60, 90 days, but they come out by email and they are--I didn't talk about this, but if you have been unsuccessful in past seasons, use that feedback to guide you in improving your application in this season. I see many an application be unsuccessful in their first go-around, people put that feedback to heart and really use it to strengthen their applications to fix areas where they struggled, or where there were identified weaknesses, and then they were awarded the grant the following year. So, after you get a little frustrated reading the comments and feel misunderstood after reading the comments, you know, spend a day or two embracing your strengths and weaknesses and trying to hear the feedback and then use it next grant season, it will make you stronger.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Do--why do all solicitations still use the term "should" when they really mean "must"?

TARA KUNKEL: Oh, gosh. That's a good question. I suspect it's the preference of our editors. I don't know the answer. So I am afraid I'm not the right person in the room to answer the question. So I'm going to defer to my colleagues who have a better answer than it's the preference of the editors. So there may be a reason why, does anybody in the room know why that is?

JANEL ZALUSKI: I think the--distinction is, "must" is a critical element must be included for peer review processes and "should" is recommended to be included for the process of peer review.

TARA KUNKEL: That's a much better answer than mine. So thank you for clarifying the appropriate answer. So the distinction between, we strongly advise you to and you must.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: I have tried to search mental health initiatives under the DOJ program plan to see if there are any funding opportunities available in this area. Are you aware of anything in this area that will be coming out this year?

TARA KUNKEL: So this is a good time to look at the program plan. Again, I hope not to invite a bunch of individualized questions by answering this one, but the Justice and Mental Health Collaborative Program is the one that you should take a look at, at BJA, but if you have these kinds of questions and you can't find it on the website, I'm telling you the program plan could be your best friend because we tried to make it very simple and maybe search in the program plan itself on keywords. I think you'll get there, but the Justice and Mental Health Collaborative is the obvious one that comes to mind. I will say that many of the programs that--like the Adult Drug Court Program, for example, do allow you to serve individuals with co-occurring disorders as well, so, don't rule out some of the programs that sound very substance abuse, some do allow you to treat co-occurring disorders as well and as you know that's prevalent.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: There's a question, the first part of the question looks to be cut off. It's regarding promoting a detective at the--and start the detective in a grant project, is this allowable in BJA, OVW, JJ? So, if you could please resubmit your question with the first part of it, I'd appreciate that. Thank you so much. Is grants.gov used only for discretionary grants? Is there a plan for BJA to use this for formula grants in the upcoming year?

TARA KUNKEL: So, I have to confess that I don't know the answer to that question. So, I am turning to my colleagues to see if anyone knows the answer to the question.

JANEL ZALUSKI: Typically, most BJA solicitations that are discretionary would be completed in grants.gov. Your application would be submitted by that method. Formula grants are typically submitted through GMS. As far as what future plans are, we do not have that information at this time. But would welcome you to visit OJP funding website for some additional guidance.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: All right. On the screen right now are--is information for the National Criminal Justice Reference Service including their website address, their e-mail address, web chat, and toll-free number. If you have any questions pertaining to this or any of the BJA webinars, or upcoming solicitations, you can contact NCJRS.

If you would please give us a few minutes, we're going to go through and look and see if we've captured all the questions. So, I'm going to go onto mute and I will try to get back with you as soon as possible. Thank you.

We did get a question resubmitted that I had asked for. So, we are hoping to get a new detective through a grant. We have the following scenario to work through. My department has a preservice academy, which means our recruits go through nine--I'm guessing nine training days or nine training months, and again it's cutting off, before they go solo on the field. It would be at this point, after nine months, that we could then promote detective and start the detective in the grant project. Is this an allow--is this allowable with BJA, OVW, and/or OJJDP grants? It is for a COPS hiring grant.

TARA KUNKEL: So, I'm going to take a stab in answering the question and then I'm going to invite my colleagues to give any clarifying questions. So, I mean, first I would say, I can't give you any general answer that applies to everything. Every solicitation is different. So, it--there are not many nearly universal rules that I could say. So, I'm going to answer the question in an abstract, encouraging you again, when you have a particular program in mind and you're applying a good--attend the applicant webinar, ask the questions specific to that solicitation. But I believe that you're laying out a scenario where you would result in a delayed start-up date potentially because of the process of training. I'm envisioning, if I think about your question, a scenario where the grant is awarded on October 1 and, you know, your academy may start, let's say, November 1 and it's a nine-month training process, and so, you know that you can't have your staff person on board for those nine months. The question becomes, "Is that impacting your project?" So, it is common for BJA to understand that there is a delay when you have to hire. But how reasonable those delays are is something that you would really want to think about in a context of the solicitation. Sometimes, projects are two years long and it is going to take you, in essence, a year to get the person on board because of the scenario you have laid out. That could really be significantly impacting your project. If you are suggesting a scenario that's more like, you know the person is in the training academy at the time of the award, and you're talking more like a three-month delay, kind of, a--where that can be justified in a--in a start-up period. And the impact on the project is something that you can really articulate but there's no substantial impact on the project. Then, that might be something that is acceptable. So, a little bit has to do with thinking through the length of the project, this person's role in the project, and what the impact of any kind of start date is on the success and the outcomes of that particular project. So, that's how I approach your question. And I believe my colleagues agree with that interpretation of the question. So, hopefully that is helpful. And if you really want additional information, again, ask during the applicant webinar of the particular solicitation.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: This is a question from earlier that I actually missed and I think it's been addressed in a different question but I'm going to ask it again. Whom do we contact about the BDW? So, the budget detail worksheet format?

TARA KUNKEL: Oh, okay. So, you know, when all else fails, we have that NCJRS website. And so, that is a good general reference. In every solicitation itself, there is a link. So, if you want to know specific to that solicitation, what the requirements are, it will be addressed in the actual solicitation itself. It's very hard for us to give broad answers for absolutely everything, but each individual solicitation really does strongly and clearly express what you have to use for that particular solicitation. So, no need to ask until the solicitation comes out and you've had a chance to see what it says, if you're still unclear and the applicant webinar doesn't discuss this, then I would say NCJRS might be a fabulous resource to give you a clarification after all those other two things have been attempted.

So, we are checking for other questions that have come in. I want to--while we're checking, talk one more time--or I didn't touch as much on the planning period that's allowable and how that might impact your budgeting. So I want to, while we're making sure we've answered every question or giving you one last second to type in a question, talk a little bit about that.

So, your grant award, you can anticipate will generally be on October 1. But often times, people need to go through their county board, would need to hire new staff, and there's no way that on October 2nd the project is starting. And so, people often ask do I budget as if I'm going to start knowing full well I'm not going to start, or should I budget on a different start date? There's no set rule, but a lot of experienced grant writers do go ahead and just work with more of a January 1 start date. Allowing for reality to occur, it's--having a January 1 start date in your budget is going to impact your capacity to hire and your particular community requires you to show it in October 1 even though that's in no universe going to happen, well go ahead and write it for October 1. We understand that hiring processes do take long. We understand that sometimes approval processes take long. So, there's no set rules, but it's just something to think about when you're budgeting. And if you are struggling with doing all of your activities within the set dollar amount and you've tried in every other way to cut your budget, think about adding in a kind of--a normal three-month planning period and you might find that you could balance your budget in that way also.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: This is a follow-up to the detective question. A little bit more information. They said that they had one BJA peer reviewer say that not having a person working on the grant from the beginning didn't sound like a good idea and therefore scored them low.

TARA KUNKEL: Yeah. So, I think if you--so you were laying out a scenario where you were, kind of, aware that this might be something that the peer reviewer is going to pick up on. So, if you were to resubmit that application, my best advice to you is to go ahead and include information about--if you don't believe it's going to, to include information, to really articulate why you don't think it's going to impact the project. If you--if you can't in all honesty make that argument, then it could be problematic to the design. If you--if you, sort of, understand and agree with their feedback, you might want to think about if there's another way that you can staff this project. But if you don't think it is going to impact or there's some details or layers that you want people to understand about your particular project, next go around go ahead and just add that extra layer. So the peer reviewers can, kind of, be a little bit in your head and understand how you are thinking about these issues. That could be helpful. It isn't always helpful. If your answer is more, like, this is just the way it is in our community, that's totally not going to be an answer that's going to overcome the peer reviewer's perspective that a significant delay in hiring would impact your project. So, the, sort of, this is the way it is argument is not maybe the strategy to go to. But if it's just something that they're not being clearly understanding or there's some nuisance that you want them to understand, like, it's not really going to be nine months, then, you know, I would go ahead and explain that a little bit better the next go around. I hope that's helpful.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: All right. At this time, we do not have any further questions. If for some reason, and again, we were having some technical problems, if we did miss your question, please send it to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at grants@ncjrs.gov. You can do that at any time and they will work with Tara and others at BJA to make sure that the question is addressed. I apologize if we missed anything. But at this time, it looks like we have answered everything that has come through.

TARA KUNKEL: Wonderful. Well, good luck in your grant writing. I hope you have found this useful. Remember again that there'll be applicant webinar specific to each solicitation on top of all of the resources that hopefully by now you have jotted down. So, I wish you luck this grant season and hope to see applications from all of you.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Thank you all very much. You have a great day.