



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS
Advancing Fairness and Transparency:
National Guidelines for Post-Conviction Risk and Needs Assessment
Technical Assistance

The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs' Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), through The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, with collaboration from the Correctional Leaders Association and the American Probation and Parole Association, invites applications from state, local, and Tribal jurisdictions to receive technical assistance to adopt national guidelines to improve the accuracy, fairness, transparency, communication, and use of post-conviction risk and needs assessment for adults.

Submission and Deadline

All applications are due by 11:59 p.m. ET on **April 30, 2023**. Applications must be submitted via the [online application form](#).

Contact Information

For assistance or questions, please contact Lahiz Tavárez, project manager at the CSG Justice Center, at ltavarez@csg.org.

Overview of Project

There are valid and growing concerns about accuracy, fairness, transparency, and communication in the use of risk and needs assessment. Risk and needs assessment results are not used enough to inform case decisions and management. Criminal justice agencies have not been given the guidance they need to communicate the strengths and limitations of risk and needs assessment. Furthermore, people who are being assessed rarely receive information about these assessments, how they work, and what they will be used to determine.

[*Advancing Fairness and Transparency: National Guidelines for Post-Conviction Risk and Needs Assessment*](#), a new resource from BJA and the CSG Justice Center, addresses these gaps with clear, concrete direction. Funded by BJA as a project of the [Justice Reinvestment Initiative](#), the guidelines were developed under the advisement of a national group of researchers, risk and needs assessment instrument developers, practitioners, and leaders in the field. The national guidelines prioritize accuracy, fairness, transparency, and effective communication and use of risk and needs assessment. Through this project, the CSG Justice Center will provide technical assistance (TA) to selected sites to adopt the national guidelines.

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This Request for Applications (RFA) seeks state, local, and Tribal jurisdictions to apply to be a Level 2 (moderate-intensity TA) or Level 3 (high-intensity TA) site. Two rounds of applications will be available, one starting in March 2023 and another in early 2024, with up to 16 total sites selected throughout the two-year grant period. There will be a maximum of six Level 2 sites and two Level 3 sites per round of applications. The [application](#) will be open for a four-week period. The site selection process will take place over the course of three weeks.

TA Application & Site Selection Process

- Step 1: Sites complete the [application](#) and perform initial assessment using [self-assessment tool](#).
- Step 2: CSG Justice Center holds a virtual session to gauge site status, goals, and needs.
- Step 3: CSG Justice Center identifies TA engagement strategy.
- Step 4: CSG Justice Center reviews applications based on selection criteria and recommends TA sites.
- Step 5: BJA reviews recommendations and selects TA sites (up to eight sites per round of applications).

Site Selection Criteria

The CSG Justice Center and BJA will consider the following factors in reviewing and selecting sites:

1. Inclusion of at least one state (department of corrections), one local probation jurisdiction, and/or one Tribal jurisdiction among the roster of selected sites.
 - The primary applicant must be a state, local, or Tribal jurisdiction responsible for the administration of post-conviction risk and needs assessment of adults in their community. Risk and needs assessments for youth are not eligible for TA under this RFA.
 - County supervision agencies, or multiple county supervision agencies applying together, will be considered.
 - Priority consideration will be given to jurisdictions that wish to examine their risk and needs assessment instruments that may be specifically related to assessing women in the criminal justice system or Tribal members who are supervised by state, local, or Tribal Nation supervision agencies.
2. Level of agency commitment, readiness to adopt national guidelines, and capacity to meet project requirements.
3. Submission of all required application documents.

The CSG Justice Center will provide TA to selected sites for **up to one year**. Sites will receive support in adopting national guidelines to improve accuracy, fairness, and transparency in the communication and use of post-conviction risk and needs assessments. Sites will receive tailored TA based on identified needs and goals. By participating in this project, selected sites will have the opportunity to become national leaders in implementing cutting-edge strategies for improving the accuracy, fairness, transparency, and communication and use of post-conviction risk and needs assessments.



Three Levels of TA

Level of TA	Timeframe	Number of Sites	Site Visits	TA Design	Types of Services	Level of Commitment
Level 1: Low Intensity	Less than 3 months	Ad-hoc requests via online form	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ One-time requests ✓ Requests for resources ✓ Peer connections ✓ Facilitate TA consultations 	Level 1 – <i>Commitment to Need for Change</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs up to commit to follow these guidelines • Signs up to receive additional information regarding resources and opportunities • Completes initial self-assessment
Level 2: Moderate Intensity	9–12 months	Up to 6 sites per round of applications	N/A	Phase I: Development Period (1–3 months) Phase II: Implementation Period (7–10 months) Community Meetings (quarterly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Level 1 services ✓ Virtual project kick-off event ✓ Monthly TA calls ✓ Assist in strategy development ✓ Policy and procedure review and feedback ✓ Implementation progress tracking through the self-assessment tool ✓ Assist in messaging with external stakeholders – CSG Justice Center to facilitate meetings, cross-train (virtual), and/or develop materials ✓ Attend stakeholder meetings ✓ Peer learning community of practice meetings 	Level 2 – <i>Commitment to Contribute Data to Inform Change</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 1 commitments • Commits to complete self-assessment tool at 6-, 12-, and 18-month intervals • Monthly TA calls • Sharing of policy and procedures • Participation in peer learning community of practice
Level 3: High Intensity	9–12 months	2 sites per round of applications	Up to 3 visits per site	Phase I: Development or Assessment Period (1–3 months) Phase II: Implementation Period (7–10 months) Community Meetings (quarterly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Level 1 services ✓ Level 2 services ✓ On-site assessment of quality and fidelity of assessment practices ✓ On-site or virtual focus groups, training, or meeting facilitation ✓ Review and feedback of agency data related to the use and application of risk and needs assessments ✓ Assist in strategy implementation ✓ Co-facilitation of working group meetings 	Level 3 – <i>Commitment to Participate in the Change</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 1 commitments • Level 2 commitments • Sharing of aggregate data related to the use and application of risk and needs assessments • Support CSG Justice Center staff with on-site activities



Eligibility

The primary applicant must be a state, local, or Tribal jurisdiction responsible for the administration of post-conviction risk and needs assessment of adults in their community. Priority consideration will be given to jurisdictions that wish to examine their risk and needs assessment instruments that may be specifically related to assessing women in the criminal justice system or Tribal members who are supervised by state, local, or Tribal Nation supervision agencies. Risk and needs assessments for youth are not eligible for TA under this RFA.

Project Length

For the first round of applications, the CSG Justice Center will provide TA to up to eight sites, a maximum of six Level 2 (moderate intensity) sites and two Level 3 (high intensity) sites, for up to a one-year period. The project period will run from June 1, 2023, to May 31, 2024.

Application Materials

Applications must include:

1. Completed [online application form](#).
2. A narrative demonstrating how the agency meets the selection criteria, agency need for TA, and commitment to national guidelines and TA requirements (e.g., agency size, instrument used, needs, ability to meet TA requirements, commitment to racial equity, diverse working group, etc.) that is double-spaced, using standard 12-point font with no less than one-inch margins, and should not exceed five pages.
3. Letters of support from the chief executive of any partner agencies (including applicant), with assurance to engage with the CSG Justice Center and partners and to participate in TA.
4. Letter(s) of support from agency oversight body (e.g., governor's office, parole board, chief judge, coordinating council, etc.).
5. Completed [self-assessment tool](#) submission.

Scoring Criteria

Applications will be scored according to the following criteria:

- **Problem statement (up to 15 points):** Define the post-conviction risk and needs assessment problem to be addressed, specifically for your agency. Use data to demonstrate scope and need. Include baseline data for the target population, if available.
- **Implementation of the national guidelines (up to 20 points):** Identify which guideline(s) your agency would like to prioritize and describe any challenges and strengths your agency currently has or anticipates.
- **Expansion or improvement of communication and use (up to 20 points):** Demonstrate how your agency would like to expand or improve the communication and use of post-conviction risk and needs assessment, and the importance of these principles for your agency.



- Examination of race and ethnicity (up to 10 points): Discuss your agency’s commitment to examine information pertaining to race and ethnicity and share any work your agency is currently doing to advance racial equity.
- Use of the self-assessment tool results (up to 10 points): Use the self-assessment tool results to inform your need for TA.
- Development of a working group (up to 15 points): Discuss what a working group for your agency would focus on and identify partners to include in the group.
- Innovative and best practices (up to 10 points): Demonstrate the agency’s commitment to best and promising practices, such as ensuring the agency uses risk and needs assessment instruments to identify clients’ risk levels and target their needs.

Review and Selection Process

A panel of reviewers will evaluate, score, and rate applications that meet the requirements outlined above. All application materials and results will be presented to BJA for final review and approval. Applicants will be notified of TA approval decisions on or around **May 31, 2023**.