

DARYL FOX: Good afternoon, everyone. And welcome to today's webinar, "Emmett Till Cold Case Investigations Program," hosted by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. At this time, it's my pleasure to introduce today's presenter Sunny Schnitzer, Policy Advisor with Bureau of Justice Assistance. Sunny?

SUNNY SCHNITZER: Okay. Thank you so much. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you all so much for joining us for today's webinar. My name is Sunny Schnitzer. I'm a Policy Advisor at the Bureau of Justice Assistance on the Courts, Communities, and Strategic Partnership Team. Just very quickly today, we'll spend some time doing an overview of the program, discussing eligibility and award information, and then talking about some of the history of the Department of Justice supporting the Emmett Till cases. Finally, we'll review some of the resources available to potential applicants and answer some of your questions. So before we get started, I'll spend a few quick minutes sharing an overview of the Office of Justice Programs and of the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

The Office of Justice Programs or OJP is a federal agency that provides leadership, grant, training and technical assistance, and other resources to improve the nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime to assist victims and enhance the rule of law by strengthening the criminal and juvenile justice system. Its six program offices support state and local crime fighting efforts. Some thousands of victim service programs help communities manage sex offenders, address the needs of youth in the system and children in danger, and provide vital research and data. Those offices include the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office for Victims of Crimes, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehension, Registering and Tracking.

OJP also works closely with two other grant-making components of the Department of Justice. So there's the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services or the COPS Office and the Office on Violence Against Women. BJA specifically is tasked with strengthening the nation's criminal justice system and helping America's local, state, and tribal jurisdictions to reduce and prevent crime, reduce recidivism, and promote fair and safe criminal justice systems. BJA works with communities, governments, and nonprofit organizations in a variety of ways. One of the most notable ways and how many of you know of us, for example, is investing in diverse funding streams to accomplish these goals.

So today, we'll be discussing the Emmett Till Cold Case Investigation Program. So we'll dive a little bit deeper into that program. But before we do, I wanted to give a very quick

overview of the program's objectives. This program is really designed to enhance collaboration between the federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecution communities to address these unresolved cases. Specifically, this program is meant to dive into those unsolved civil rights cold case murders that occurred before December 31st of 1979. Finally, I do want to highlight in addition to investigating and prosecuting these cases, one of the final objectives of this program is really to bring justice and support and resolution to families, community and stakeholders that are impacted by these murders.

So just a quick heads up, the solicitation was released about two weeks ago on March 23rd. As a reminder, the Grants.gov deadline for this particular solicitation is May 20th. And full applications will be due via just grants on May 25th. One quick thing I do want to flag, in the past, we have kept that open until 11:59. This year, applications—full applications will be due at 8:59 PM. So I did want to note that change from previous years.

So as I mentioned earlier, you know, just some high level things about this program. It's really designed to give support to our partners in state, local, and tribal law enforcement and prosecution agencies. Funds are limited to violations of civil rights statutes resulting in deaths that occurred no later than December 31st, 1979. And, you know, I also want to highlight in addition to providing direct support via training and technical assistance and funding, this program also works very closely with some of DOJ's other components including the Community Relations Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Civil Rights Division.

Just very quickly, before we move on to some of the specifics, and actually I'm going to ask we go back a slide very quickly. I did want to talk a little bit about the goals and objectives of the program. This will be very important, especially if you're developing applications or if you look to develop an application for this program. So as I mentioned, certainly, one of the main goals is to bring justice and reconciliation for the hundreds of cold case murders and murder victims associated with civil rights violations through identification, investigation, prosecution, and other resolution of these cases. In addition, bringing justice is just a piece of this. The other piece is that we want to provide support to families, to stakeholders, to loved ones, and to entire communities who've been rocked by these murders. All right.

Okay. So eligibility. To be eligible for this program, you must be a state, local, and tribal law enforcement—or tribal law enforcement agency which includes prosecutor's offices. One thing I will highlight on this slide, those agencies can partner with other agencies with nonprofit organizations, with research institutions, any partners that that will support

the work, you know, that is certainly eligible, but the primary applicant eligibility is state, local, and tribal law enforcement and prosecution agencies. Okay.

A few quick notes about the program. In Fiscal Year 2022, BJA expects to make four awards at a maximum amount of \$500,000 each. The grant start date, if awarded, would be October 1st of 2022. And these—the performance period for these awards is thirty-six months or three years. Allowable costs for this program include things such as staffing, costs associated with processing crime scenes or forensic evidence, expert testimony, case preparation, cost to inventory or track or monitor and investigate these cases, and then support and dialogue with family members and stakeholders. This program importantly does not require a match. Okay.

On this slide, you'll see some of the additional application sections that you'll need to submit if you plan to apply for this program. And here are a few additional things. As you—any applicants looking to apply will need to submit an abstract. Abstracts will need to include applicant's name, a description of the scope of the issue that will be addressed, the amount of federal funds being requested, any partners or current coordination around this—around these cases and a list of these goals and objectives and activities. So the Proposal Narrative should be submitted as an attachment in JustGrants. The attached documents should be double spaced using a 12-point font, you know, application should not exceed 20 pages. And on the slide, you'll see a scoring breakdown for each section of the narrative. Just very quickly, I want to go over a little bit of what we're looking for in each section. Anyone interested in applying for this program can download the solicitation and get more details of what we're looking for on each of these sections. Just very quickly, I'll go over some of that.

In the Description of the Issue, we're looking to hear a bit about the history, the nature, and extent of pending cases that occurred prior to January 1st, 1980. And that includes any summary information that you have, it may include gaps in information. We would like applications to include a description of current efforts or gaps and efforts and some of the challenges including lack of resources that an applicant may face.

The Program Design is really where applicants should respond to the issue defined—that was defined in the earlier section. So that's to include activities, to identify cases, to investigate cases, to prosecute. Applicants should describe how they'll work to enhance witness cooperation. And to include things like how to work with families of victims and other stakeholders and what safeguards will be in place. This should also include a rough project timeline that will be attached to when those activities will be occurring in the project period.

And for Capabilities and Competencies, we're really looking to hear from applicants. Some of the expertise of the agency and its partners, we'd really like to have an understanding of applicants' plans to ensure they have a diverse set of staff and partners or subject matter experts that will be a part of this. And then a bit about the applicant management structure and the ability to not only carry out the activities, but to manage the grants as well. And then certainly, you know, for any OJP grant, you know, a, kind of, final reminder is that OJP requires applicants to submit regular performance data. So applicants will be expected to submit information and a plan for collecting that information.

And then finally, a Budget and Budget Worksheet will be required. And just very quickly, the budget section for this is going to be embedded into your—into the applicant's JustGrants application on the website. It should be itemized for each year. As a reminder, there is no match required. Okay.

I do want to spend just a few moments today discussing Emmett Till and the importance of this work. So in 1955, Emmett Till, a 14-year old black youth, visiting family in Mississippi, was murdered by white men after a white woman claimed that Till had whistled at her. Till, who was from Chicago, Illinois visited relatives near Money, Mississippi during the—during the summer of 1955. Next slide.

Four days later, Till was forcibly abducted from his relative's home by at least two men. His brutally beaten body was found three days later in the Tallahatchie River. Because there did not appear to be a basis for federal jurisdiction given the limited scope of the civil rights statutes in effect in 1955, the Federal Bureau of Investigations did not investigate Till's murder at that time. Next slide.

Mississippi state authorities, however, arrested two men, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam. They were indicted for murder and tried by a local all-white jury which quickly acquitted them. Following their acquittal, the men admitted to a journalist that they murdered Till. Both Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam are now deceased. Emmett Till's mother insisted on a public funeral with an open casket. The pictures of Till's body were publicized—published in magazines and shown on television. People throughout the country were shocked. As I mentioned a few moments ago, the federal civil rights statutes were extremely limited in 1955. Ida B. Wells, Mary Talbert, Frederick Douglass are amongst some of those who'd advocated for an enactment of federal laws to criminalize racial crimes for decades before the first federal hate crimes laws were enacted in 1968.

In 2005, 50 years after Till was murdered, Congress issued an apology for failure to enact a federal anti-lynching hate crime legislation. This work continues today. As many

of you likely saw on March 29th, President Biden signed into—signed a law into bill or a bill into law to make lynching a federal hate crime. This comes after over 200 previous attempts at federal anti-lynching legislation. So in 2006, the FBI began its Cold Case Initiative, a comprehensive effort really identify and investigate racially-motivated murders committed decades ago. So this was an effort that was taken on in part as a part of the original Emmett Till Act which was enacted in 2008. So the Emmett Till Unresolved Civil Rights Crime Act was signed into law on October 8th, 2008. It requires the FBI and DOJ to look at unresolved matters that occurred before December 31st, 1969. It encouraged the FBI and DOJ to work on cold cases even when there wasn't federal prosecution that was necessarily going to be available but to assist state and local jurisdiction. The Civil Rights Division, in conjunction with US Attorneys' Offices and the FBI, have been focusing significant time and resources to assess the prosecutability of more than 100 pending cold cases. Next slide.

On December 16th, 2016, the Emmett Till Unresolved Civil Rights Crime Reauthorization Act was signed into law. The Reauthorization Act then extends this date of acceptable cold cases to December 31st, 1979. And it also requires that the department hold meetings with representatives of the Civil Rights Division and the FBI, the community relations service, and other eligible entities where appropriate and to provide the court to state and local agencies. And while the federal government has the significant role to play in these investigations, many state and local jurisdictions have a large role to play as well. The cold—the Emmett Till Cold Case Investigations Program here at BJA is designed to provide that support on these very complex cases for state, local, and tribal jurisdictions in their effort to investigate, resolve, and bring conciliation to communities that have experienced trauma from these cases. Okay.

So just very quickly, the bureau of Justice Assistance does have a few available resources on our website for agencies that are—that are doing cold case investigations, certainly in addition to the age of evidence. These cases also are complex in many other ways. We encourage applicants to take a look at some of these resources. All right.

So very quickly, we'll go through some of the resources that are going to be available to applicants. So as a reminder, any interested applicant will need to submit their SF-424 on Grants.gov. If you're having any issues with that, there are some resources on the screen that can help you. Most of the contents of the application should be submitted through the JustGrants system. This system, there is a customer support hotline. There are a lot of resources online for you to use. I can tell you that as someone who uses the system every day, these resources are really helpful. That hotline is also very helpful.

And then finally a few additional pieces of information here, if you're—if you have additional questions, feel free to reach out to the OJP Response Center and certainly subscribe to our newsletters if you'd like to receive additional information about some funding opportunities that will be coming down the road. And again, final reminder there is—there are dual deadlines for this program. So you'll need to submit your SF-424 and SF-LLL at Grants.gov by May 20th. And you'll need to submit the full application with attachments on the JustGrants system by May 25th at 8:59 PM Eastern.

And certainly stay connected with us. You know, feel free to—if you'd like text updates, you can text OJP with your email address and we'll send text to you, we have social media pages where we regularly post about existing solicitations and funding opportunities, and then finally our website is a great resource for additional publications, initiatives, lessons learned, toolkits, and that's at bjaj.ojp.gov.

If there's one takeaway from this and certainly these slides will be available after today's session, I'd definitely recommend that you reference this slide. If you have any issues with submitting information, please, please call these numbers and emails to these help lines. They'll be there to help you and really looking forward to answering your questions.

DARYL FOX: Okay. Thanks for that, Sunny. Very informative. Lot of good resources to access as well. So for those that are on the webinar today, if you do have a question, if you go to the bottom right side of your screen, you'll see three dots. Within there, you'll see Q&A, send that to all panelists and we'll go ahead and organize those. I'm sure Sunny would be glad to answer anything you may have. And just to reiterate again, that the PowerPoint, recording, and transcript for today will be posted to the BJA website. Links been added into the chat. Look out for that within the next seven to ten business days for you to go back and reference anything mentioned here today. So, no questions in the queue as of now. We'll just hold on for a few more moments. Nothing in the queue currently, Sunny.

SUNNY SCHNITZER: Great.

DARYL FOX: Very informative and comprehensive. I think you've covered most—everything that was needed. We'll just wait a few more moments. If you do have a question, please go ahead and enter that in. Just to grab this slide up again, this is—as Sunny mentioned, this was released March 23rd and here are the two deadline dates specifically for both grants.gov and JustGrants. And then just to reiterate, Sunny. So the date of this—the information needed is in reference to cold cases prior to 1980, is that correct?

SUNNY SCHNITZER: Correct.

DARYL FOX: And here on this slide, just a three-bullet program objectives. That does include that information. Okay. So I don't see any questions in the queue at this time. Is there anything in closing you wanted to mention, Sunny?

SUNNY SCHNITZER: Thank you all again so much for joining. Really appreciate you taking the time to learn about this important program.

DARYL FOX: Okay. So on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Assistance and our panelist, we wanted to thank you for joining today's webinar. This will end today's presentation.