

FY 2022 Field Initiated: Encouraging Innovation: Webinar Transcript
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DARYL FOX: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to today's webinar, "FY 2022 Field Initiated: Encouraging Innovation," hosted by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. At this time, I'd like to introduce Michelle White, Senior Policy Advisor with the Bureau of Justice Assistance, for some welcoming remarks and to begin the presentation. Michelle?

MICHELLE WHITE: Thank you, Daryl. Welcome, everyone, to our webinar to discuss this exciting solicitation. We're going to do things a little bit differently today than we normally do for our webinars on our solicitations, because we think that this is a very special solicitation that BJA has put out, and that we really are encouraging new and innovative, progressive ideas from the field. And so, we want to leave the bulk of the time for you all to ask us questions. So, we're going to do a very, very brief overview of the solicitation, and then I'm going to hand over my portion of this, after I conclude, to one of my colleagues, Trish Thackson, to talk a little bit about more details of the solicitation and also some resources for you as potential applicants. And then we're going to, as I mentioned, reserve the bulk of the time for you all to ask us questions and for us to provide the answers to you all.

Let me go ahead and launch into a little bit about the solicitation. In terms of an overview of this offering, we are looking for projects that focus on preventing and reducing crime and strengthening criminal justice outcomes by collaborating with the field to identify, define, and respond to either emerging or chronic crime problems and systemic issues, so the big issues in our country. BJA is looking for proposed strategies to address those issues, including, and in particular, trying new approaches, addressing gaps in responses, and building or translating research knowledge or building capacity.

The applications under this program should not duplicate other BJA-funded solicitations. So, we really are looking for things that can't be funded or are not likely to be funded under other solicitations, and also, importantly, should have the potential to broadly benefit the field of criminal justice nationally. In particular, we're looking for applications that address efforts to respond to both, precipitous increase in crime and/or address substance use disorders and/or efforts to prevent or respond to drug overdoses and fatalities, while also building approaches and tools that enhance justice reforms that build confidence in the justice system and trust between residents and the criminal justice system.

To talk a little bit about the two categories within the solicitation, and then I'm going to dive into a little bit about eligibility. All this information is pulled directly from the solicitation, so you will be able to access that, certainly, and dig into all of that a little bit deeper. So, the first category focus is really for state, local, tribal, or regional research partnerships. Here, applicants should propose to test a strategy at any of those levels while working with a research partner to document implementation and also develop

tools to support national replication. So, you're going to see, again, this is the theme. While the projects could be state, local, tribal, or regional in focus, the importance here is national replication ability. Regional projects must propose a model that is specific to a regional need or could be implemented effectively regionally and then replicated elsewhere. The applicants are required to formally partner with a researcher organization for development, assessment, and/or evaluation activities, as well as the development of the tools to support replication. And as an important note here, while you are required to have this research partner, no more than 20 percent of the total budget may be used to support research or those evaluation services. Next slide, please.

And then the other category is Category 2, which really is national strategies. So, applicants here would need to develop targeted national strategies that will make an impact in addressing a critical need or gap in the field. Applicants are required, again, to work with a research partner to document implementation and develop tools to support further implementation in the field. And, again, of important note is that that partnership with a research partner, that the funds to support that partnership cannot exceed 20 percent of the total budget. Next slide.

Arguably, I believe this is the most important part not only of our discussion today, but possibly of the whole solicitation, is to really think about the focus of this, which is really BJA looking at the field to be innovative and forward-thinking. This is sort of the filter to think about when you are designing your project and the definition of innovative. An applicant should propose a strategy or response that has not been implemented previously, yet *is* supported by research, data, theory, or evidence. Should propose a new modification to an existing strategy or response that has not been implemented previously, yet is supported by research, data, theory, or evidence. Or, propose a new approach to delivering existing evidence-based strategies or responses that has not been implemented previously and has the potential to reduce costs and increase efficiencies while maintaining effectiveness, including organizational developments and changes that may enhance the effectiveness or long-term sustainability of the existing strategy or response. And, certainly, this means within the criminal justice system. Another final sort of point I will make before handing things over to Trish: innovative does not necessarily equal new to a particular community or region or state unless the innovation that you're proposing has never been attempted in the broader representation of that community. For example, if that innovation has not been attempted or implemented in a tribal community or a rural community or similar. So, again, we've had a lot of folks ask questions about what's innovative to us in our community. Really think about whether it's innovative overall or has been attempted again in that broader representation of your community. With that, I'm going to turn it over to Trish.

TRISH THACKSON: Thank you, Michelle, and good afternoon, everyone. Thanks for joining us today. I'm going to spend a little bit of time discussing the particular focus areas of this solicitation and then share some resources with you, and we'll move into your questions.

We have a number of focus areas, and I'm going to sort of read these through so that you have them in the front of your mind as we go into the Q&A section: accelerating justice through the creation of approaches and tools that build the capacity to gather and analyze data and information to understand key decision points and levers for change, to reduce rates of incarceration, community correctional control, and racial disparities, including through reforming pretrial processes, sentencing practices, mandatory minimums, and collateral consequences; building alternative strategies and systems, such as restorative justice approaches and diversion programs, that enhance outcomes for those with criminal justice involvement and/or prevent unnecessary involvement in the criminal justice system. This can include efforts to expand access to services for individuals experiencing behavioral health needs, substance use disorder, and other crises, as well as supporting law enforcement and/or community-driven efforts to effectively resolve problems and reduce arrests; also, increasing deflection and/or diversion opportunities, particularly at the pre-arrest or pre-trial phase; enhancing collaborations across criminal justice, behavioral health, and public health systems to reduce barriers to success for persons in the criminal justice system with substance use and/or mental health issues; developing innovative, fair, and equitable responses to combat, address, or otherwise respond to precipitous or extraordinary increases in crime, or a type of crime, such as homicides, assaults, or hate crimes; improving relationships between communities and the criminal justice system by building trust and confidence, increasing access to justice, and improving perceptions of fairness across the justice system; and enhancing or sustaining innovative and effective practices implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At this point, what's up on your screen is some different ways to connect with us, so that you make sure that you're getting information about solicitations and programs and other support as soon as it's available. And you can text OJP with your email address to subscribe to email updates. You can also go to these links to subscribe to our Facebook or Twitter account, or feeds. And then if you go to our website, bjaj.org, you can both explore a lot of different opportunities and resources on our website and also sign up to be able to be on our email lists by that route as well, so that we can be sure to get the information that you're looking for on an ongoing basis.

We also have a number of resources to help you with the application process. I'm not going to read out these long URLs because nobody can possibly type them that fast, but they are on your screen here. The Grants.gov Learning Center will help you to understand how to use the Grants.gov system, which is the first step in our application processes. And then we also have a JustGrants Application Submission Training. And that will help you with the second step of our application process. We do use a two-step process for all of our applications now. The Grants.gov is a very basic, minimum amount of information, and then JustGrants is where all of the detailed application materials will be submitted. So, both of those just help you to get the lay of the land with those systems. And then we have the BJA Grant Application Education Series, a series of webinars that can help you with learning how to access BJA grant funding.

And with that, we're going to open it up to give everyone the opportunity to ask your questions, so that we make sure that we are responding to what you're actually interested in rather than just talking.

DARYL FOX: Great. Thanks so much, Trish and Michelle. So as mentioned on the slide here, if you have a question, far bottom right of your screen, and then in the Q&A box, send to "all panelists." We'll go through those with the remaining time we have for the next half-hour. That's really, as mentioned, the crux of today's presentation, is to meet you all and answer the questions you may have. We'll kind of go in order as they're submitted. So, for the panel, the first one is for Category 2, "Is it assumed that national strategies are building upon an already tested model? For example, a project to plan expansion of a successful category 1-type project."

MICHELLE WHITE: So, this is Michelle. I will take a stab at that, and Trish can jump in if I get it wrong or if she wants to add something. I think national strategies, I would say, are building upon something that could be a Category 1-type project, or it could be something completely outside of something that maybe would fall under Category 1, but, again, sort of that criteria of both being innovative and then also be based in research, even if the research was outside previously of the criminal justice system.

TRISH THACKSON: And I would just reinforce what Michelle said and add that because we are looking for innovation, we're not asking for a replication of something that already exists, but, certainly, we want to encourage building upon evidence-based practices and promising practices that have been established to create innovative programs and approaches.

DARYL FOX: The next question: "For Category 1, the research component is identified as a researcher organization. For Category 2, this is identified as a research partner. Are these different? For Category 1, can an organization be a sole practitioner or an ad-hoc team of researchers just for this effort?"

MICHELLE WHITE: This is Michelle. I would say that they are not intended to necessarily be different, that a research partner or organization could be sole practitioner, could be affiliated with an organization that's sole focus is research. So long as it meets the appropriate eligibility criteria and you can demonstrate the capabilities and competencies of that research partner, I wouldn't get too hung up on the difference between an organization and a partner.

DARYL FOX: "Do locations and local partners need to be specifically identified in the proposal? Or can they be identified in conjunction with..." [indistinct] "and others as part of the work plan?" And in parens, "(will impact the ability to partner with law enforcement agencies similar who have received funding under, say, for example, the Shepard-Byrd Hate Crimes program?)"

MICHELLE WHITE: So, in terms of, "Do they need to be specifically identified in the proposal?" I think that that is very specific to the proposal question, that I don't know

that I can completely weigh into. I think there's probably a balance in sort of what makes sense for what you're trying to achieve. I think it says, yeah. So, I'm not exactly sure that sort of the second part will impact the ability to partner with law enforcement agencies. So, in terms of, what's most important, I think, about the part that's in parentheses is that we definitely don't want to provide funding to someone else who is already receiving BJA funds to do a targeted program or intervention. So just maybe be very careful about that if you're talking about making sub-awards to a specific site who might otherwise already be receiving DOJ funds to do a specific type of programming or activity. I don't know, Trish, if you can salvage that answer in any way, shape, or form.

TRISH THACKSON: Ha ha! I think, to the extent possible, you want to include the specific partners, but if there are partners that for whatever reason, you are not able to necessarily solidify a role prior to the application being submitted but still want to leave the door open to be able to work with either a particular partner or a particular area of the justice system. You know, for example, the treatment services. And if you don't have someone identified in that arena prior to application, but you want to be able to leave the door open for that partnership, I think it's okay to identify that you're working on identifying a partner in a particular area, but to the extent possible, you want to identify partners at the application stage.

DARYL FOX: Great. Thanks so much. "Who is the TTA provider..."

MICHELLE WHITE: Let me just add...I'm sorry.

DARYL FOX: Please go.

MICHELLE WHITE: I would also add, as you're developing your application, if you're finding that the answer we gave to that, because I know we were a little bit unclear on how to answer that, isn't clear, feel free to reach out to us. Our emails are, I believe, available, either in this presentation or in the solicitation, there's a way to reach us. Feel free to reach out afterwards if you need a little bit more clarity on that that we weren't able to provide.

DARYL FOX: "Who is the TTA provider for this program? What will their role be?"

TRISH THACKSON: There is not the designated TTA provider for this program. Based on what some of the areas of focus are, there are TTA providers affiliated with those targeted areas. For example, there are TA providers around overdose prevention and SUD treatment and interventions that exist under other programming. But there is not a particularly designated TA provider for this program.

DARYL FOX: The next question is on the application process. "Applicants are only to attach a time task plan and not fill out the web-based timelines. Is that correct? If JustGrants requires that the web-based timeline form be filled in, what should applicants do and how to proceed on that?"

TRISH THACKSON: Based on the way we set the solicitation up in JustGrants, the web-based timeline actually should not show up at all. If it is showing up, please email us and let us know. But it actually should not be visible for you. So that shouldn't be a conflict.

DARYL FOX: "Can you say more about what the term 'national' means? Is there still room to do some local implementation work in the context of providing TA to a national audience?"

MICHELLE WHITE: All right, so I'll take a stab at this one. I would say, again, without helping you design what your proposal is, I think there is definitely still room to think about local implementation or pilots in the context, but, largely, the national work is really about how to really come up with national strategies.

DARYL FOX: "For the focus areas, would it make our application stronger if proposals addressed more than one focus area?"

TRISH THACKSON: Not necessarily. We're really looking for programs that you're going to be able to successfully develop and implement. So, while there certainly is the potential to touch on multiple focus areas, depending on, you know, what it is that you're doing, I wouldn't say that we're encouraging you to try and get all of it. We really want you to take the time and the opportunity to develop an innovative, robust program that can address the needs that you have identified. Michelle, I don't know if you have anything more to add to that.

MICHELLE WHITE: No. I think that was great.

DARYL FOX: This next question may be relevant to the Grants.gov outline. Their particular organization has a DUNS number, but their request for a UEI has been backlogged. Is that going to delay their impact, their ability to apply?

TRISH THACKSON: I would definitely reach out to the help desk around that. They have a very standardized response with instructions on what to do where that's concerned, and I don't want to muddle what that answer is, so I would definitely reach out to those folks.

DARYL FOX: Yeah, and we'll go ahead and put that in the chat for the contact information for Grants.gov and JustGrants, and the OJP Response Center to that fact. If you have any questions substantially about the programmatic requirements of this opportunity, you can reach out to them as well. We'll put that in the chat as we go through today.

One organization works in several states on criminal justice reform, focusing on prosecutor reform, community safety, and unjust sentencing. "The legal mechanism we

innovated is currently used in several states but has not been introduced at the national level. Does this disqualify us for the innovative category?”

MICHELLE WHITE: I don't want to say it disqualifies you. I think to really think about sort of the slide on innovation or the section of the solicitation that kind of walks you through sort of, for lack of a better term, the test around whether it's innovative or not, what you're trying to do, we're definitely not looking at replication. This is not the solicitation that is just to replicate something. It is really going beyond that step. So, again, sort of go back to, it may be considered innovative if it is being implemented in a new way or in a new community type. But just sort of replication in a place where it's never happened before is not really what we are considering innovative. The caveat to that, I would say, is all of these solicitations are peer-reviewed. And so, you really have to think about how peer reviewers would review your proposal and whether or not they would believe. So, these are other folks, you know, that work in the field, and whether they would really define what you are proposing as innovative based on the way the solicitation reads.

DARYL FOX: “We have never received federal funding in the past. Can you share a bit about how federal funding is different from foundation or private funding? Can you share a link to the reporting requirements for the grant?”

MICHELLE WHITE: I will start by saying, that could be probably a webinar in and of itself.

TRISH THACKSON: Ha ha!

MICHELLE WHITE: That very likely is a series of webinars. Trish talked about the webinar series around applying for grants. There are also a number of webinars, financial management guides, all kinds of great information on the OJP and BJA websites about grants. Grants.gov has a wealth of information. There's a lot of great resources out there about identifying grants, applying for grants, what happens after you get an award, managing grants, reporting requirements. There's a lot to learn and a lot to do, but there's also a lot of great resources out there that can assist you in those efforts.

TRISH THACKSON: I'm going to drop the “OJP Financial Guide” into the chat here, and, hopefully, that will give you a little bit of...I guess someplace to start. It won't cover the differences specifically, but it will give you a good understanding of the requirements of our grants. [Indistinct].

DARYL FOX: And the actual solicitation link has been entered by the host as well. So, if you need more details on those specific requirements, within there, you can access that pdf.

“Our organization has a dedicated research department. If another department in our organization proposes a project under the solicitation, could our organization’s research department serve as our partner?”

MICHELLE WHITE: We've actually received some version of this question a number of times, and the best response you can kind of get to that is to take a look at the research integrity document and all of the explanation that you would need to provide there to demonstrate independence and integrity between the two different units or departments. So, if that can be demonstrated, then it's likely okay, but, again, that's something to keep in mind in terms of a peer reviewer doing that examination, sort of the first review of your application. It really comes down to how well you can document that independence and integrity. I don't know, Trish, if you want to add to that.

TRISH THACKSON: Nope. You covered it all. Thank you.

DARYL FOX: “For participants of the research project design, are incentives or stipend payments an allowable expense?”

MICHELLE WHITE: I'll take a stab. Typically, those are not allowable expenses. The only exceptions to that I've seen are projects through NIJ, the National Institute of Justice. I don't know. Trish, you can correct me if I'm wrong there and also, Daryl. The financial guide that was referenced earlier would also be able to, ideally, give you a lot more details around allowable expenses. I don't know, Trish, if you had anything else to offer.

TRISH THACKSON: Generally, you're correct. Generally, they're not allowable expenses. There are sometimes some exceptions made, but they're very limited. If you have a specific scenario where you feel that that's going to be crucial to being able to move forward, send us an email and explain the situation, and we can try to help you to understand whether or not there would be an exception there. But as Michelle said, take a look at the “OJP Financial Guide.” It really does go into detail about allowable and unallowable, and even the exceptions that are generally an option. And then if you still have questions, you can reach out from there.

DARYL FOX: This is mentioned in different questions. But just to sum it up, do both Category 1 and Category 2 applicants have to have a research partner?

MICHELLE WHITE: Yeah.

TRISH THACKSON: Yeah.

DARYL FOX: And I can handle this one. “Will a recording of the presentation be made available?” And the answer is, yes, we will have the captioned recording, PowerPoint, and transcript for today posted to the BJA website. So, you'll get an email notice, when you register today, when those items will be available. That seems to be the end of the questions in the queue at this time. If you do have a question, far bottom right of your

screen, three dots, hit "Q&A." Then send to "all panelists." And for our panelists, would you be able to enter your email in the chat, if you're so inclined? Otherwise, we can refer them to the OJP Response Center for particular questions. That'll probably be suggested. We'll go ahead and enter the OJP Response Center email and phone number in for you to contact if you do have specific questions about the solicitation itself. The JustGrants and Grants.gov lines would be if you have technical questions related to those systems.

MICHELLE WHITE: It looks, Daryl, like there's a question around crime analysts being a research partner, and also, similarly, one around, "If a nonprofit conducts both research and programmatic work but implements in a test strategy, is an outside research partner required?" I think I would give sort of the same answer that I did previously, just to make sure to address sort of the nuance of your question. It really comes down to being able to demonstrate independence from and integrity around research, and that it's really research that you're doing and not just data collection.

TRISH THACKSON: I see a question about email addresses. I'm going to go ahead and drop my email and Michelle's email in the chat unless you have an objection, Michelle.

MICHELLE WHITE: Nope. Go for it, or I can certainly do it. And then I just saw another question: "Can one agency submit two proposals, one in each category?" I would say you are certainly not prohibited from doing that in any way.

DARYL FOX: And while we don't have a slide on this particular item, there is the due date. There are two separate due dates to apply. The Grants.gov deadline is going to be July 6. And that's going to just be two forms that are included, and they're detailed in the solicitation. The JustGrants deadline is your main application. That's due July 11th. So be mindful that there are two specific deadlines, and each have their own requirements.

TRISH THACKSON: I just dropped both of our email addresses into the chat, so who needs them should be able to grab them there.

DARYL FOX: Another question has come in. "There appear to be no similar field-initiated solicitations in previous fiscal years from which to draw upon. Are there any?" Question two is, "Is there any indication that the solicitation will return next year?"

TRISH THACKSON: So, this field initiated tends to come out every few years. I believe the last time was in fiscal year 2017. And I would not anticipate, generally, having it come out next year. It typically skips a couple years, but we don't know for sure at this time. I would say your best bet in general to be aware of any new solicitations as they're coming out is to be on our mailing list. And that way, you'll automatically get notifications of each solicitation the day it opens.

MICHELLE WHITE: And, Trish, just to add to that, the other thing I would say is, even if, by chance, it came out again next year, the likelihood that it looks exactly or even similar to this version in terms of the focus areas is fairly unlikely. So, if you are thinking in terms of, "Well, maybe next year," next year very likely could still be looking for innovation but likely in very, very different areas. I think that's something to keep in mind as well.

DARYL FOX: Another question has come in. "Can you just clarify a little more on what is considered a research partner?" If you could explain a little more detail on that requirement.

MICHELLE WHITE: I would say, I think there's a fair amount of detail in the solicitation. Without sort of a more nuanced question, I'm not quite sure how to answer that. I think the important part is to be able to demonstrate a couple of things, their capabilities and competencies to be able to fulfill the function of a research partner, and then also to be able to demonstrate their independence and integrity around a proposed project in your application.

DARYL FOX: Okay, we have a few more moments today, so if you do have a question, as mentioned, enter it in the Q&A box. We'll be glad to get to it with the time remaining. So, once again, as mentioned, the recording and PowerPoint transcript will be posted to the BJA website. Keep an eye out for that in your email in the next week or so is when this will be posted. Michelle and Trish, is there anything in closing you wanted to mention?

TRISH THACKSON: I don't have anything other than thank you for your time.

MICHELLE WHITE: Yes. We very much look forward to all the exciting, very innovative proposals that you all send our way. Thank you.

DARYL FOX: Wonderful. On behalf of the Bureau of Justice Assistance and our panelists, I want to thank you for joining today's webinar. This will end today's presentation.