

OVW Fiscal Year 2024

National Resource Center on Cybercrimes Against Individuals

Pre-Application Information Session transcript

ELAINA ROBERTS: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining us for the fiscal year 2024 National Resource Center on Cybercrimes Against Individuals (referred to as the NRCC program) pre-application session. This session is for the fiscal year 2024 solicitation that was posted on February 15. My name is Elaina Roberts and I am the Grant Management Specialist for the NRCC program, and I am joined by Associate Director Krista Blakeney-Mitchell, who oversees the Cybercrimes program as well as the Rural and Consolidated Youth programs. Also on this call is Sheila Griese, a Management Analyst.

Our goals for this session include focusing on key aspects of the NRCC program solicitation and providing relevant information and answers to your questions. This is not intended to be a comprehensive review of the solicitation, and applicants are expected to fully read the solicitation before applying. That said, this is a new program and you may have lots of questions, which we welcome. So please feel free to raise your hand or drop a question in the chat box, and I, along with Krista, will try to address it in the moment. If we start to run short on time, I will skip questions and try to answer them at the end. You may also email the ovw.cybercrimes@usdoj.gov email box with any questions. Finally, if you don't already have the solicitation in front of you, it may be a good time to get it, as I will be referencing certain parts of it, along with the page numbers.

In today's session, we will provide you with information about the NRCC program, provide important deadlines and eligibility requirements, go over the program requirements and out-of-scope activities under the program, and finally, we will go over the two-step application process that is required for all applicants. At the end of the slides are resources and contact information to assist you as you begin your applications.

Many of you already know, but just in case, this program is administered by the Office on Violence Against Women or OVW. OVW provides federal leadership in developing the national capacity to reduce violence against women and administer justice for and strengthen services to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

Let's start by going over what this new program is all about. The NRCC program was authorized by the recent reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, or VAWA, 2022. It is codified in 34 U.S.C. § 30108. The program supports the establishment and maintenance of a national resource center to provide resource information, training, and technical assistance to improve the capacity of individuals, organizations, governmental entities, and communities to prevent, enforce, and prosecute cybercrimes against individuals.

Next, we'll look at the definition of cybercrimes against individuals. Cybercrimes against individuals are defined as criminal offenses that involve the use of a computer to harass, threaten, stalk, extort, coerce, cause fear to, or intimidate an individual, or, without consent, distribute intimate images of an adult, except that the use of a computer need not be an element of the offense. The term "computer" includes a computer network and an interactive electronic device. Cybercrimes against individuals do not include the use of a computer to cause harm to a commercial entity, a government agency, or non-natural person. This program is not intended to provide training and technical assistance to or resource information about cybercrimes against corporations, commercial entities, or government agencies. The focus must be on a cybercrime against a person. As you can read in the definition, this includes crimes such as cyberstalking, cyber harassment, and the nonconsensual distribution of an intimate image of an adult, among other crimes.

The NRCC has three statutory purpose areas that we'll go over. Please note that for the FY 2024 solicitation, OVW will not be implementing Purpose Area 3 of the statute, which authorizes a recipient to conduct research. In the future, OVW may address the research activities listed under Purpose Area 3 in Phase 2. For this solicitation, though, please do not propose activities related to conducting research. Let's go over the two purpose areas that proposals should focus on.

Purpose Area 1. Funds under this program must be used for the establishment and maintenance of a national resource center on cybercrimes against individuals that shall offer a comprehensive array of technical assistance and training resources to federal, state, and local government agencies; community-based organizations; and other professionals and interested parties related to cybercrimes against individuals, including programs and research related to victims.

Purpose Area 2. The resource center must maintain a resource library that shall collect, prepare, analyze, and disseminate information and statistics related to the incidence of cybercrimes against individuals, the enforcement and prosecution of laws related to cybercrimes against individuals, and the provision of supportive services and resources for victims, including from underserved populations, of cybercrimes against individuals.

We've received several questions regarding the target audience for the national resource center. The resource center is intended to provide training and technical assistance to all government agencies—federal, state, and local. And this will include law enforcement, prosecutors, judges and judicial personnel, probation, and parole. It's all criminal and civil justice folks, such as civil attorneys and judges. It's community-based organizations working with victims of cybercrimes. It's researchers and other interested professionals. It's providing relevant information and resources for folks working on issues related to cybercrimes against individuals.

The award period for the FY '24 solicitation is 24 months for Phase I. There will be a required six-month planning period to plan the resource center. This will be followed by 18 months for the establishment and maintenance of the resource center. Funding for Phase I is up to \$2 million. OVW anticipates making only one award as a cooperative agreement.

A cooperative agreement is a form of award under which OVW expects to have ongoing substantial involvement in award activities. For this program, the substantial involvement includes participating in project meetings; developing and approving final agendas; suggesting, reviewing, and approving faculty, subject matter experts, consultants, products, and curricula; identifying participants; approving a web application site; and approving the form of trainings and technical assistance provision. Recipients must be willing to work closely with OVW throughout the entire project and be willing to modify project activities at OVW's request as needed. Please refer to page 7 of the solicitation for more information.

So now let's turn to the very important deadlines and eligibility requirements. Application submissions are due by 8:59 PM Eastern Time on April 11. Submitting an application is a two-step process over the course of several days. You will first submit the SF-424, which is the Application for Federal Assistance, and the SF-LLL, the Disclosure of Lobbying Activities form, in Grants.gov. You must submit these forms in Grants.gov by April 9 at 11:59 PM Eastern. Otherwise, you will not be able to then submit your full application in the Justice Grants System, known as JustGrants, by 8:59 PM Eastern on April 11. This is two days after the Grants.gov deadline. Please note that the deadline to submit in JustGrants on April 11 is not a midnight deadline. It is 8:59 PM Eastern Time. We'll go over this process in more detail at the end of this session.

KRISTA BLAKENEY-MITCHELL: Elaina, we do have a few questions that came in. The first one says, "This is such helpful information. Will the audience also include government departments of education, human services, and other bureaus, as well as organizations that interact with the subject matter but not in prosecution specifically?"

ELAINA ROBERTS: Yes, I think it would. Not knowing exactly all the details of what each of those agencies would do, but this is—especially when we think about the resource library, this is supposed to be useful information for different entities. The primary focus will still be on providing that training and technical assistance for folks who are working on the issues of cybercrimes against individuals, but absolutely, when we think about the other possible agencies that would touch this subject and be doing this type of work, it would include, I think, some of what was listed in that question.

KRISTA BLAKENEY-MITCHELL: Okay. We have one other question: "Is the intention for the information library to be essentially a website?"

ELAINA ROBERTS: "Essentially a website." I think that's more something for when the recipient of the award goes into the planning phase. We can discuss what that will look like. I don't think that, at this time, all of the details have been worked out, simply because this is a brand-new program. It's going to evolve over time. We were also mindful when we think about website, web application—what is that going to look like, what is going to be housed on it. Those are all things that I think will come out during the planning period.

Eligible applicants for this program are limited to nonprofit private organizations that focus on cybercrimes against individuals, that can provide documentation demonstrating

experience working directly on issues of cybercrimes against individuals, and that include on the organization's advisory board representatives who 1) have a documented history of working directly on issues of cybercrimes against individuals, 2) have a history of working directly with victims of cybercrimes against individuals, and 3) are geographically and culturally diverse.

Please note that the advisory board representatives must be documented in the Who Will Implement section. Applicants must identify and describe members of the applicant's advisory board who have a documented history of working directly on issues of cybercrimes against individuals and have a history of working directly with victims of cybercrimes against individuals. Applicants must also describe where advisory board members are located and their knowledge of or expertise working with culturally diverse communities. Read the solicitation and prompts for information very carefully. Please refer to pages 8-9 for eligibility information.

All applicants must submit a certifications and assurance letter with their application. Before I touch on how to upload this document with your application, I want to highlight the first certification listed. The first certification states that the programs funded by the grant meet all of the eligibility requirements of 34 U.S.C. § 30108. Please note that OVW anticipates making only one award. We do not anticipate funding multiple programs or organizations for the resource center. That's not to say that the lead organization cannot subcontract or use consultants as part of the project. However, we anticipate only one award.

KRISTA BLAKENEY-MITCHELL: We have a question in the Q&A: "For the advisory representatives, is this an advisory board that applicants are forming or an organization's own board of directors advisory board, meaning, as applicants, our own board of directors?"

ELAINA ROBERTS: That's a great question. Per the solicitation and the statute, all applicants who apply for this program must include on the organization's advisory board representatives who meet these requirements. It's not listed in what capacity the advisory board representatives serve—for instance, if they're part of the board of directors or this is a separate advisory board. But, per the solicitation, this must be in place at the time of the application, because it is an eligibility requirement. And again, you're going to reference that, which is why I highlighted it, when you submit the certifications and assurance letter. The other thing that I want you to know about this certification and this first requirement is that you're certifying that you meet all of the eligibility requirements. And maybe I only touched on this with my answer, so I apologize. This goes back to the previous slide, though, regarding eligibility. And that's that the organization focuses on and has the experience working directly on issues of cybercrimes and that there's the advisory board with all these requirements. So again, please refer to pages 8-9 of the solicitation for eligibility requirements and ensure that you meet each of these.

The certifications and assurance letter must take the form of a letter on letterhead that's signed and dated by the Authorized Representative. A sample letter is linked on page 10

of the solicitation, and OVW encourages using the sample letter. The letter will be uploaded in JustGrants as an attachment. You will upload it where it lists NRCC Certifications and Assurance in JustGrants. Failure to submit the required certifications and assurance letter will disqualify an application from further consideration.

Now let's turn to the program requirements and out-of-scope activities. All applicants are required to partner with two population-specific organizations that focus on historically marginalized and underserved communities. A population-specific organization is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization that primarily serves members of a specific underserved population and has a demonstrated experience and expertise providing targeted services to members of that specific underserved population. The two partnerships must be documented in two mandatory Memorandums of Understanding, or MOUs, and be submitted with the application. Because there will be two population-specific organizations, applicants should submit two MOUs with their application. This program does not require that all partners be on one MOU like other OVW programs may. The MOU section on page 17 of the solicitation provides additional information. There could be other MOU partners on the project if known at the time of the application. You can also submit letters of support with your application, but these will not be scored. However, it's anticipated that the recipient of the award will enter into additional agreements with partners, consultants, and subgrantees that bring subject matter or technology expertise to the project, particularly after the planning period with OVW. Please note that the involvement of the two mandatory partners must also be described in the Proposal Narrative, which we'll go over in just a moment. The Proposal Narrative is listed on pages 12-14 of the solicitation. Failure to submit an MOU or the submission of an MOU missing a required partner signature will result in removal from further consideration. Do we have some questions, Krista?

KRISTA BLAKENEY-MITCHELL: Yes, we have two questions. The first one is, "Because of two MOU requirements and we have other MOU partners besides the required two, do those need to be in a separate MOU now or do we assume that we can do that after the planning period? Say, we are subcontracting with other agencies and we'll include those in our narrative, how do we include those on the MOU?"

ELAINA ROBERTS: That's a great question. And I think that's entirely up to you and given the time parameters of when the application is due. If you would like, and you know who those partners are and can get an MOU together, absolutely, you can submit a third MOU, or it could be part of maybe one of the first two if you needed it. We just anticipate, because you have two different population-specific organizations, that would result in two MOUs. But absolutely, you can have a third MOU if you know at the time. You can also submit the letters of support or letters of commitment from those organizations. Because again, we will be going through all of those during the six-month planning period to confirm who the project partners are and who should be on the project with us.

KRISTA BLAKENEY-MITCHELL: Next question: "Can an organization submit letters of support and MOUs for multiple proposals? Similarly, can an organization apply as a prime while also supporting others?"

ELAINA ROBERTS: That is a good question. I may need to circle back with folks at OVW on the specifics about the second part of that question. But about the first part of the question, “Can an organization submit letters of support and MOUs to multiple proposals?” that part is fine. You can be an MOU partner on several applications. The second part, I am a little uncertain about and may need to circle back—unless Krista, you want to jump in?

KRISTA BLAKENEY-MITCHELL: Sure. So, the second part is, “Can an organization apply as a prime while also supporting others?” And I’m assuming that, by supporting others, you mean that you’re providing an MOU or letter of support on another application. There was nothing in the solicitation that stipulated that this could not happen. So, that being said, I think this is definitely allowable. But you should also probably recognize that if you’re a prime on one, you’re not going to be funded on another, and vice versa. So, I think that’s something to consider as well.

ELAINA ROBERTS: Yeah, thank you for that, Krista. All right. So, let’s turn to the out-of-scope activities. Funds may not be used to provide resource information, training, or technical assistance on cybercrimes regarding the distribution of intimate images of a minor. You might remember that the definition of cybercrimes against individuals does include the distribution of intimate images, but it is specific to those of an adult. Images of a minor are out of scope and cannot be addressed by the resource center. Funds under this program may not be used to provide direct victim services. And finally, funds under this program will not support proposals focused on a single state, region, or local geographic community. The resource center will be national in scope.

Next, I will go over how to apply, and I will highlight some specifics of the application that were referenced earlier. Applicants may find this funding opportunity on Grants.gov by using the Assistance Listing number 16.061, the Grants.gov opportunity number O-OVW-2024-171926, or the title of the solicitation. The application process requires two steps. First, you will start the application in Grants.gov. This is where you will upload the SF-424 and SF-LLL documents. Second, the application process will continue and be submitted in JustGrants. Now, you might be wondering how you get from Grants.gov to the JustGrants System so you can finish, and I’ll go over that now.

After an applicant submits the two forms in Grants.gov, the applicant that is registered will receive an email within 24 hours from JustGrants prompting them to complete the rest of the application. This is when the applicant will upload all the other required documents. If the applicant is new to the system and has never applied in JustGrants before, the email will prompt the new user to register with JustGrants and establish an Entity Administrator. The Entity Administrator is responsible for managing entity-level information and assigning the various roles in the JustGrants System. This person is also the E-Biz Point of Contact designated in the SAM.gov system where grantees have access to their funds. We did not go over SAM.gov today, but please note, applicants must register and be able to access each of the systems described in the solicitation. Registering can take several weeks altogether, so please start the process today.

Once applicants log in to JustGrants to finish and submit the application, the Proposal Narrative, the budget and budget narrative, two MOUs, and the certifications and assurance letter will be uploaded as attachments. And there will also be online questionnaires to complete, such as the Pre-Award Risk Assessment, Applicant Entity Questionnaire, and the Summary Data Sheet. Please note that you may also upload letters of support with your application. However, they are not required and will not be scored. Again, the certifications and assurance letter will be uploaded as an attachment in the Certification Section. It is listed as the NRCC Certifications and Assurance Letter in JustGrants. Remember, an application will not be considered if it is missing the letter or any of the items listed on this slide.

I want to briefly go over a few key items in the required application documents, as there are several interwoven pieces in the solicitation. In the Proposal Narrative, under the What Will Be Done section, applicants are asked to describe the intersection of gender-based violence and technology-facilitated abuse/cybercrimes. Gender-based violence is a cornerstone of OVW programs, and we know there is a disproportionate impact on these crimes with women, girls, and LGBTQ+ individuals. Also, as we discussed, applicants must partner with two population-specific organizations. The role that each partner will have on the project and how they will help contribute to the success of the project should be described in the What Will Be Done and the Who Will Implement sections. Finally, we discussed the organization's advisory board members as part of the eligibility and certifications components. Applicants are asked to describe the board members under the Who Will Implement section as well.

We've gone over everything on this slide already, but I wanted you to have the specific information for each of these sections and where to find them in the solicitation. Again, budgets should only reflect 24 months for Phase 1 of the project. Phase 2 will be planned depending on appropriations and the success of Phase 1, and may be for 36 months.

Please note that you will be prompted to add a Proposal Abstract in a text box when completing your application in JustGrants. The abstract is not scored but helps us to have an overview of the proposed project. The Data Requested with Application includes three online questionnaires: the Pre-Award Risk Assessment, the Applicant Entity Questionnaire, and the Summary Data Sheet. Every applicant must fill them out with the application. The questionnaires are reviewed by OVW's Grants Financial Management Division, or GFMD. I'm going to touch first on the Summary Data Sheet. There is a question regarding whether the applicant has expended \$750,000 or more in federal funds during their last fiscal year. If yes, then the applicant must provide the end date of their last fiscal year. GFMD frequently finds that applicants do not include the date in their information. Please be sure to do this if it applies to you.

The next questionnaire I want to touch on is the Pre-Award Risk Assessment. GFMD has found in prior years that applicants do not fully answer all parts of the questions. This requires GFMD to reach out to the applicant, which may delay funding decisions. Common issues encountered include applicants that indicate they have internal policies in

place, but then do not provide the specific list of topics covered in those policies and procedures. Also, applicants may fail to provide the process for tracking expenditures, and, more specifically, whether or not they are tracking budgeted versus actual expenditures. These are just a few examples. Please be sure to read and respond to each part of a question.

So, where to begin? First, read and probably reread through the solicitation to understand all of the steps that are required to submit an application. Anticipate that those steps will take several days and up to a few weeks to fully complete. I am referring to everything outside of writing the application, though that will take time as well. But I cannot emphasize enough that some steps, such as obtaining a Unique Entity Identifier, or UEI, for folks who have never applied for a DOJ grant before, or registering with SAM.gov and Grants.gov, will each take several days to complete. Every year, we hear from folks who underestimate the amount of time for setting up these systems. We recommend starting the process now, but for sure no later than the dates listed in the solicitation. It is also a good idea to start gathering the information on the advisory board members and start the MOUs with the two required population-specific project partners. Applicants that do not submit the certifications and assurance letter and two MOUs will not be considered for funding. And OVW will not contact applicants for any missing documents. Finally, please remember that you must begin the submission process in Grants.gov by April 9. This is two days prior to the application deadline in JustGrants on April 11 at 8:59 PM Eastern Time. Those of you in earlier time zones, please note that this is Eastern Time, so please plan accordingly so you don't miss the deadline.

Lastly, I want to provide you with some helpful resources as you go through the application process. You can find all OVW solicitations that are open, including the NRCC program, on the OVW site. Please look under the funding tab and then click Open Solicitations. Also, the Department of Justice has made a collection of self-guided training resources, including training and a virtual Q&A session on application submissions. There are also several financial resources available to applicants. These can assist in budget development and providing other federal financial guidance. I want to highlight the Creating a Budget bullet point. This is a webinar by GFMD on how to develop a budget. Also listed are the Uniform Guidance, found at 2 CFR 200, and the DOJ Financial Guide. And of course, you can always reach out to us at OVW if you have any questions with the submission of your application. Please note, we cannot comment on or provide insight into your proposed project, but we are here to assist with technical or confusing processes.

KRISTA BLAKENEY-MITCHELL: So, we do have one question pending. The writer says, "Please pardon this question, as I know it was already posed. I just want to clarify and confirm. Is it required to have the advisory committee established at the time of the application submission? In other words, letters of support that indicate willingness to serve on a potential advisory committee, should the funding be secured, would not be considered adequate?"

ELAINA ROBERTS: So, I understand wanting to be very clear. I think if you look at the certification and assurances that are required at the time of the application, you are

required to certify that you have an advisory board that focuses on those three items listed. Let me get to that page. So, when you look at the eligibility information, which starts on page 8, it says, "Number 3, include on the organization's advisory board representatives who—" So I read that as being in place and you're certifying it's in place at the time that you submit your application. You can always contact the OVW.cybercrimes inbox. That is the email that's listed in the solicitation. But certainly, if you have questions, I'm sure other folks have similar questions.

Okay. It doesn't look like folks have anything else. So, I just want to thank those of you who are joining us live today. This is being recorded. It will be posted soon on the OVW site. Please reach out with additional questions. And we appreciate your interest in this new program. It's very exciting. So, thank you all so much.