

OVW Fiscal Year 2024 Rural Program Pre-Application Information Session Transcript

KRISTA BLAKENEY-MITCHELL: Welcome to the Office on Violence Against Women Pre-Application Information Session for the Fiscal Year 2024 Rural Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking Program solicitation. I am Krista Blakeney-Mitchell, Associate Director with the Rural Unit. This information session is being presented by the OVW Rural Team members Rachel Strasinger, Stevi Black, Holly Meyer, and Brandyn Salvatore. This webinar is meant to serve as a source of information regarding the Rural application process. It is strongly recommended that you read the full solicitation and have it open to follow along today as we will reference information and page numbers. Although we will not review every page and section of the solicitation, we will highlight the Rural Program's features, application requirements, and what's new about the program. And now, I will turn it over to Stevi to begin this presentation.

STEVI BLACK: Thank you. During this webinar, we will review what is new with the Rural Program, the solicitation process and key dates, Rural Program scope, Rural Program eligibility, application information, helpful hints and tips, and we will also leave time at the end for questions. The Office on Violence Against Women 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. OVW administers both formula-based and discretionary grant programs established under the Violence Against Women Act and subsequent legislation. To learn more about the work of OVW or to find the resources and information for applicants and grantees, please visit the website listed on the slide, www.justice.gov/ovw.

The Rural Program supports efforts to enhance the safety of rural victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking and supports projects uniquely designed to address and prevent these crimes in rural areas. The Rural Program is required to set aside no less than 25% to 40% of appropriated funds to support activities that meaningfully address sexual assault. In fiscal year 2023, the Rural Program funded 51 projects totaling more than \$36 million. Since 1996, the Rural Program has awarded over \$845 million supporting 1,361 grants. No less than 75% of Rural Program funding must support projects in rural states. Rural-designated states and territories are based on the census. Those states and territories are listed here and on page 11 of the solicitation. Although, rural designation factors into the requirement to direct 75% of available funds towards rural states, all applicants, except federally recognized Indian Tribes, which are statutorily defined as rural, are required to document the eligibility of each county and census tract that they propose to serve.

We'll discuss both the new initiative and the updated priorities in greater detail later. For now, just flagging these as changes from the FY23 solicitation. FY24 includes a new

Rural SANE Initiative, as well as an updated priority area related to equity and Tribal sovereignty. Additionally, please note that this year, 2020 census data will be used to determine rural eligibility by census tract -- 2010 data will no longer be accepted. We will discuss this process in greater detail later, but for now, we just wanted to note the changes from last year.

Please note the two-step submission process in JustGrants and Grants.gov, as well as the different deadlines and the different systems used during this process. The application process requires active registration in Grants.gov, SAM.gov, and JustGrants. The process of registering and activating these accounts can take several weeks. It is strongly suggested that applicants ensure that they are registered and have active accounts in SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and JustGrants by March 26th. These dates are also listed in the solicitation.

Again, we just want to highlight the two-step submission process, which you can find beginning on page twenty-nine of the solicitation. Note that an application cannot be initiated in JustGrants until the SF-424 and the SF-LLL have been submitted in Grants.gov. So, it is advised that applicants complete that step as soon as possible but no later than April 12th at 11:59 PM Eastern Time. Please also note the times associated with both of these deadlines.

Applicants must interface with a number of systems to successfully submit an application. Note that all these systems have dedicated support. In this next section, we will address purpose areas, strategies, and priority areas. This slide presents an abbreviated overview of Rural purpose areas and strategies. The full text of Rural purpose areas and strategies can be found in the solicitation. All projects must address one or more purpose areas and one or more strategies. Note the overlap and the similarities between many of the purpose areas and strategies. Programs should be thoughtful when combining these, ensuring that the selected strategies support and align with relevant purpose areas. A bit of clarification and some nuance for Purpose Area 3. Applicants proposing to address Purpose Area 3 must address both 3a and 3b. Additionally, activities related to prevention and awareness are capped at 30% of the budget and activities.

For FY24, the Rural Program has two priority areas, advancing equity and Tribal sovereignty and strengthening efforts to prevent and end sexual assault. We will explore these in greater detail in the next few slides, but for now, please note that the language around Priority Area 1 has changed for FY24. Unlike purpose areas and strategies, addressing a priority area is optional. Next slide. OVW will implement this priority in two ways. The first, NEW in FY24, is to give special consideration to applicants from Indian Tribes, particularly those in Alaska or other Tribes subject to criminal jurisdiction by a state. Applicants under this priority will be asked to identify the eligibility of the Tribe in the application. By increasing Tribes' access to public safety-related funding, particularly those in PL-280 states, OVW seeks to enhance the ability of Tribes to implement Tribal solutions to sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking in their communities.

The second way this priority is being implemented is by giving special consideration to applications where the applicant or a partner has a demonstrated and distinctive history of using culturally appropriate and linguistically specific strategies to serve communities that have been historically marginalized and faced barriers to accessing mainstream systems and service providers. Applicants under this priority must describe barriers and how the applicant builds on the unique help-seeking strategies and sources of resilience found in their historically marginalized community. The term “underserved populations” means populations who have faced barriers in accessing and using victim services, and includes populations underserved because of geographic location, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, underserved racial and ethnic populations, populations underserved because of special needs such as language barriers, disabilities, alienage status, or age and any population determined to be underserved by the attorney general or by the Secretary of Health and Human Services as appropriate. This definition is also listed in the solicitation.

Examples of activities that would meet this priority include but are not limited to, being or partnering with a population-specific organization focused on serving historically marginalized and underserved populations. If partnering with another organization to meet this priority, equitably compensate and actively collaborate with the partner throughout the project and support the partner's participation in OVW TA. Implement activities that engage, promote, and serve historically marginalized and underserved populations such as creating population-specific outreach and educational opportunities in their communities, providing population-specific services, hiring staff with expertise working with underserved populations, or hiring staff from underserved populations. And now, I will turn it over to Rachel.

RACHEL STRASINGER: Thanks, Stevi. OVW will also implement Priority 2 in two ways. The first way is by giving priority consideration to applications that focus primarily, by which we mean 75% or more of proposed goals, objectives, activities, and budget, on responding to non-intimate partner sexual assault, including sexual assault across the lifespan. This can include prevention, outreach, offender intervention, medical forensic care, civil legal assistance, and victim services. Applicants are encouraged to provide comprehensive services that address the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of survivors of sexual assault and their families. If seeking to implement this priority, please make sure to accurately reflect the percentage of grant activities focused on sexual assault in the Summary Data Sheet.

Examples of activities that would meet this priority include but are not limited to, providing relevant, accessible services to survivors across the lifespan, regardless of when the incident or disclosure took place, providing long and short-term evidence-based, holistic healing services, building organizational capacity to enhance sexual assault services, developing policies and procedures directly related to serving sexual assault victims, collaboration among relevant organizations or community partners to address sexual assault. Additional examples include legal and medical advocacy, addressing the intersection of sexual violence, substance abuse, human trafficking,

and/or incarceration, sexual assault-focused prevention, intervention, and awareness or outreach, expanding sexual assault advocate positions, enhancing existing SANE and SAFE programs and services, addressing challenges posed by lack of access to quality sexual assault services.

The second way OVW will implement Priority 2 is by giving priority consideration to applications that focus primarily, or 75% or more, on proposed goals, objectives, activities, and budget on improving the criminal justice response to sexual assault, including the investigation, charging, and prosecution of sexual assault crimes. These programs must include a partnership with sexual assault service providers to ensure that survivors receive comprehensive services throughout the criminal justice process. Again, if seeking to implement this priority, please make sure to accurately reflect the percentage of grant activities focused on sexual assault in the Summary Data Sheet.

Examples of activities that would meet this priority include but are not limited to, providing sexual assault training for law enforcement and prosecutors, providing sexual violence training for judges, supporting sexual assault investigator or prosecutor positions, enhancing or creating law enforcement and/or prosecution sexual assault victim advocate positions, developing or expanding Sexual Assault Response Teams, or SARTs, supporting the apprehension, relinquishment, and storage of firearms, to include education and training on this topic, minimizing barriers to accessing sexual assault services through assistance with transportation, housing, mental health needs, and related financial assistance and improving accessibility of services, and/or providing criminal legal advocacy training for advocates. Again, applying under a priority area is completely optional, but meeting the criteria for one of the FY24 priority areas described here can result in special consideration. In the next section, we will discuss funding restrictions, primarily activities that compromise victim safety and activities that are out-of-scope and unallowable.

OVW does not fund activities that jeopardize victim safety, deter, or prevent physical or emotional healing for victims, or allow offenders to avoid responsibility for their actions. For a full list of activities that compromise victim safety and recovery, please review the Solicitation Companion Guide, which is linked on page nine of the solicitation. Out-of-scope activities are also listed on page nine. We won't read through them all but please review carefully. The remaining unallowable costs are listed on page 23 of the solicitation. If an application includes out-of-scope or unallowable activities, it may receive a deduction in points or be removed from consideration. Next slide, please.

In this section, we'll discuss Rural Program eligibility requirements. The following entities are eligible to apply for this program -- states and territories, Indian Tribes, local governments, and nonprofits, including public or private entities, including Tribal nonprofit organizations. For definitions of entities, please refer to page 13 of this solicitation.

Applicants must demonstrate that the proposed project will serve a rural area or rural community. Applications must include the proper printed documentation demonstrating

that the proposed service area meets this eligibility requirement. The only exceptions to this requirement are applications submitted by federally recognized Indian Tribes, which are statutorily defined as rural. Instructions to complete the Rural Eligibility Documentation Process can be accessed through the link on page 15 of the solicitation as well as on the DOJ website. An overview of this process will be provided shortly. No other forms of documentation will be accepted and OVW will not contact applicants who do not submit this application.

Documenting service area eligibility starts by determining whether or not a county to be served is entirely rural using the Health Resources and Services Administration or HRSA tool. If not, applicants will use data from the 2020 US Census to determine whether there are rural census tracts within the county that are eligible. If multiple service areas are proposed, supporting documentation is required for all proposed service areas. If the application is proposing to serve a fully rural county, it must include the one-page printout from the HRSA website that identifies that the county is fully eligible. If the application is proposing to serve a partially rural county, it must also include a printout from the 2020 census data that shows the rural and urban housing units for each census tract in that county and notes which census tracts the project will serve.

Step one is to determine if the county to be served is rural using the HRSA tool. Next slide, please. Applicants will search for each county using the HRSA tool, which will return one of the three messages listed here -- yes, all locations in this county are eligible; yes, some parts of this county are eligible; or no, no location in this county is eligible. If message one is returned, no further documentation is needed for that specific county. Include a snip or a PDF of the HRSA results with your application. If some or none are deemed eligible, proceed to step two to document eligible census tracts within that county. Please note that even if message three is returned, there may still be eligible census tracts within your proposed service area.

Here is an example of what message one from the HRSA tool will look like. Next slide, please. Step two is to document eligible census tracts when a search with the HRSA tool indicates that some or no locations within a specific county are eligible. Next slide, please. The instructions in the solicitation will guide you through the process of pulling census tract data, which will result in a chart like the one shown here. If the percentage of rural housing units out of the total units available is greater than 50%, that census tract is eligible for services. Only the 2020 dataset as specified in the instructions should be used. Highlight the eligible census tracts and include a snip or printout with your application as shown on the slide. Repeat this process for each county to be served. And now, I will turn it over to Brandyn.

BRANDYN SALVATORE: Thank you. Applications must include at least one partner and must include a victim service provider as a formal project partner or the lead applicant. Please review the full definition of a victim service provider on page 16 of the solicitation. Applications must include agencies and organizations necessary to implement the proposed project. These partners may include victim service providers,

law enforcement, prosecutors, courts, healthcare professionals, et cetera. For more information, please see page 16. Next slide, please.

For applicants proposing to provide legal assistance for victims, the application must include the delivery of a Legal Assistance Certification Letter that addresses the items listed on this slide. More information on the delivery of the Legal Assistance Certification Letter can be found on pages 14 and 15 of the solicitation. The sample letter is also available through a link on page 15. In the next section, we will discuss types of applications, award period and budget caps, application contents, and common application challenges, and we will share some tips.

There are two types of applications, new and continuation. New applicants are those who have never received funding under the Rural Program or whose previous Rural Program Grant Award expired on or before April 16th, 2023. The second type of application is continuation. Continuation applicants are those that have an existing or recently closed, any time after April 16th, 2023, Rural Program Grant Award. Continuation funding is not guaranteed. Please note that recipients of an FY 2022 or FY 2023 grant award under this program are eligible to apply for the Rural SANE Initiative only. Please review the information on page 11 in further detail.

The grant award period is 36 months. Budgets, including the total estimated funding on the SF-424, must reflect 36 months of project activity. We anticipate that the grant award period will start on October 1st, 2024. This program typically makes awards in the range of \$500,000 to \$750,000. OVW estimates that it will make up to 55 awards for an estimated \$36,400,000. Funding levels under this program for FY 2024 are continuation applicants not addressing the sexual assault priority are limited to \$750,000 for the entire 36 months, continuation applicants addressing the sexual assault priority are limited to \$950,000 for the entire 36 months, new applicants not addressing the sexual assault priority are limited to \$500,000 for the entire 36 months, new applicants addressing the sexual assault priority are limited to \$700,000 for the entire 36 months. Applicants for the SANE Initiative must submit a separate application. Those applications are limited to \$500,000 for the entire 36 months. OVW may make an award for a successful application under the SANE Initiative and another Rural Program Award for a successful new or continuation application.

For FY 2024, the Rural Unit proposes a special initiative to address the shortage of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners or SANEs in rural communities. The SANE Initiative aims to enhance the quality of care for survivors of sexual assault by supporting the creation of sexual assault medical forensic exam services in rural communities and increasing the number of trained SANEs in rural areas. Successful applicants will establish hospital-based and/or community-based programs that offer sexual assault medical forensic exams and sexual assault victim services using coordinated community response strategies. OVW encourages innovative approaches to addressing the unique challenges of providing these services in rural, Tribal, and underserved communities. Selected sites will have access to specialized technical assistance or TA providers with expertise on this issue. OVW will select three to four pilot sites to be

awarded up to \$500,000 for 36 months to establish new rural-specific sexual assault medical forensic exam services in their communities. Applicants proposing to address the SANE Initiative are eligible for up to \$500,000, which can be awarded in addition to a rural project or as a standalone initiative.

For SANE Initiative applicants, partnership requirements include either the applicant or its partners should have a mission that is specific to the provision of sexual assault services. Either the applicant or its partners must be a victim service provider and any sexual assault services outside of the medical forensic exam should be provided by trained victim advocates. Staff implementing activities must have specialized training in sexual assault. Either the applicant or its partners must offer services to address the impact of sexual assault across the lifespan.

Examples of possible project activities include but are not limited to, implementing a new sexual assault medical forensic exam or SANE Program, provision of sexual assault medical forensic exam services utilizing a mobile model, establishing partnerships with local hospitals to secure facilities to conduct sexual assault medical forensic exam services, partnering with or training qualified midwives to perform sexual assault medical forensic exam services, minimizing barriers to accessing sexual assault medical forensic exam services through assistance with transportation, emergency financial assistance, childcare, language access, et cetera, purchasing equipment, kits, and other items needed to conduct sexual assault medical forensic exams, recruiting and providing training to registered nurses to become SANEs, and/or providing ongoing training for SANEs.

Applicants with SANE projects that are currently operational should not apply for the SANE Initiative, which, again, will only support three to four pilot sites. Instead, apply to support those projects through a regular FY24 Rural Award. The SANE Initiative is only intended to support new SANE projects and is not appropriate for SANE projects that are currently operational. Additional requirements include participating in a planning period of up to nine months with OVW-designated TA providers in addition to ongoing TA throughout the project period. Required deliverables at the end of the planning period include an MOU and working protocols among partners. Staff implementing activities must be hired by the end of the planning period. During the planning period, develop partnerships to ensure a collaborative community response to sexual assault i.e., Sexual Assault Response Teams or SARTs or Multidisciplinary Teams. Developing a new SANE Program that offers comprehensive sexual assault forensic exams and supportive services for survivors. Pre-existing SANE projects that are currently operational are not eligible to apply. Develop or enhance policies and procedures that align with the Department of Justice's National Protocol for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Examinations-Adult/Adolescent and the National Protocol for Sexual Abuse Medical Forensic Examinations-Pediatric, and the National Protocol for Intimate Partner Violence Medical Forensic Examinations.

Provided they meet the eligibility criteria, current OVW grantees are eligible to apply for the SANE Initiative. Applicants may apply for the SANE Initiative alone or applicants

may apply to both the SANE Initiative and for FY 2024 funding as a new or continuation applicant. If applying for both, a separate application is required for the Rural Program and for the SANE Initiative. Please be sure to indicate in your project title that you are applying for the SANE Initiative. In the event that an applicant submits both applications and both are selected for funding, OVW will make two separate grant awards, one for the SANE Initiative Project and one for the new or continuation Rural Program Award. Next slide, please.

Applications consist of the Proposal Narrative, the Budget Detail Worksheet and Narrative, the Memorandum of Understanding, or MOU, or Letters of Support. Please note that only courts and applicants to the SANE Initiative may submit Letters of Support in lieu of the MOU. And Rural Eligibility Documentation, which is not required for Indian Tribes. The Proposal Narrative, Budget worksheet and narrative, and MOU are scored during the peer review out of 100 points total. Applications missing one or more of these components may be removed from further consideration. The Proposal Narrative includes the Purpose of the Proposal section worth 15 points, the What Will be Done section worth 40 points, and the Who Will Implement section worth 15 points. Next slide, please.

The MOU is a document containing the terms of the partnership and the roles and responsibilities between two or more parties, and it must be included as an attachment to the application in JustGrants. The MOU must be a single document and must be signed and dated by the authorized representative of each proposed partner organization during the development of the application. OVW will accept electronic signatures. Please do not submit more than one MOU. Missing signatures may result in a point deduction or removal from consideration, particularly if the MOU is missing the signature of a required partner. The MOU can include multiple signature pages as long as each page includes the names, titles, and dates for all signatories to the MOU.

Budgets and budget narratives will be submitted as attachments. All budgets should include the required OVW training and technical assistance set aside -- \$10,000 for applicants from the 48 contiguous states, and \$15,000 for applicants from the territories of Hawaii and Alaska. All budgets should include adequate funds to address language access and accessibility needs. If you have other resources to cover the cost of these services, please note that in your budget. All project partners should be fairly compensated for their contributions. And now we will hear from our grants management--our Grants Financial Management Division or GFMD.

LISA: In the next couple of slides, we're going to focus on aspects of your application that relate to the documents that our financial team, the Grants Financial Management Division, or GFMD reviews. More specifically, we'll discuss some items that GFMD has identified from prior years' applications that could help with expediting our review process. So, for today, we're going to highlight certain aspects of the Pre-Award Risk Assessment and provide you with a link to a detailed webinar on how to develop the budget that will be included in your application.

First, we'll highlight the items identified in the Summary Data Sheet, which is completed by all applicants. Specifically, two items that we would like to discuss are the Single Audit response and the IRS three-step safe-harbor procedure. OVW requests that all applicants provide a statement as to whether they have expended \$750,000 or more in federal funds during their last fiscal year. If they have, then they indicate that and also specify the end date of their last fiscal year. However, GFMD is finding that applicants do not always include all this information. Please ensure that this question is answered in its entirety on the Summary Data Sheet. It's question number three.

Another item that we'd like to highlight from this solicitation is specifically for nonprofit organizations. If you use the IRS three-step safe-harbor procedure to determine your executive's compensation, you are required to provide a disclosure letter. Please refer to the solicitation for more details and a link to a sample letter. Note that there are four required parts of this disclosure letter. The sample letter provides outlines all four parts of the disclosure, so please be sure to follow the sample and provide a response to each of the four pieces.

The next item that we'd like to discuss is the Pre-Award Risk Assessment questions, which assists GFMD during their Pre-Award Risk Assessment review of all applications. Each applicant must prepare a response to all 11 questions, and each question has multiple parts. We've noticed from prior years that applicants do not always fully answer all the parts of the questions, which in turn requires GFMD to reach out to the applicant, which--and that may delay funding decisions. Some of the most common issues that we've encountered have been, for example, question number two, where the applicant indicates that they do indeed have internal policies, but they don't provide a list of topics covered in the policies and procedures. On question number three, some applicants failed to provide a brief summary of the organization's process for tracking expenditures and more specifically, whether or not it tracks budgeted versus actual expenditures. These are just a few examples, but in general, please make sure that you read each piece of each question and provide a full and comprehensive response.

This next slide will quickly highlight some resources that are available to you as you are creating the budget to be submitted with your application. Over the last couple of years, GFMD has developed a detailed webinar presentation on how to develop a budget to be submitted with OVW applications. This presentation addresses some of the challenges that you might face with your budgets and provides some insight into OVW's budget review process. This webinar can be found at the link on this slide. Next up is the Uniform Guidance, which can be found at 2 CFR 200. Use your favorite search engine for this one. Other resources include the DOJ financial guide and the solicitation itself, and we'll also drop those resource links into the chat. Next slide, please.

We know that this is a lot of information to process, so if you have any questions about the GFMD information we discussed, please feel free to reach out and contact the GM--GFMD helpdesk at 888-514-8556 or by email at OVW.GFMD@usdoj.gov. And I just want to put a plug in. We have someone who monitors that email each day, and you'll

probably receive the quickest response, and it will be in writing if you shoot us an email. So, now, I will turn it back over to Holly with the Rural Unit.

HOLLY MEYER: Thank you, Lisa. I appreciate it.

Common application challenges. Some of these application challenges include not reading the solicitation to understand eligibility, service area, or partnership requirements. Make sure you meet all solicitation requirements before you spend valuable time completing the application. Also, not allowing enough time to complete registration or activate accounts in Grants.gov, SAM.gov, and JustGrants. Start this process early to mitigate problems before time of submission and ensure that all accounts are active by March 26. Failing to submit Rural Eligibility Documentation or submitting incorrect documentation. So, please note that JustGrants will not prevent you from submitting an application that is missing required documentation. And OVW will not contact applicants for missing documentation.

Common application challenges that we see with the MOUs include omitting a signature title and date for each partner on the MOU. Failing to submit an MOU with the application or submitting multiple MOUs. Only one MOU will be accepted for the project, and it must include the signatures of all partners. For those applicants eligible to submit Letters of Support in lieu of an MOU, failing to provide the same level of detail as the MOU. Okay. And next slide. Additional challenges include ignoring the formatting requirements on page 17 of the solicitation. Also, failing to use headings from the solicitation in the Proposal Narrative, exceeding the 20-page limit on the Proposal Narrative, and failing to submit a 36-month grant budget.

We'll talk about some tips. Tips for developing a successful application include using headings and subheadings that correspond with the solicitation sections. Use the templates and samples available on our website for budgets, certifications, MOUs, LOSs, et cetera. Start working on MOUs as soon as possible to ensure sufficient time to finalize partnership details and collect the required signatures. Make sure you are meeting all the partnership requirements detailed in the solicitation. Remember that a victim service provider must be either the applicant or a partner on the project. Okay. Next slide. More tips include not assuming that peer reviewers or OVW staff are familiar with your organization or program. Where appropriate, use data to support your proposal. If applying under the sexual assault priority, be sure to correctly indicate the percentage of sexual assault activities in the Summary Data Sheet. If you are applying for the SANE Initiative, be sure to include the words "SANE Initiative" in the application project title.

As mentioned previously, several helpful resources are available on our website, www.justice.gov/ovw/applicants. You'll find the Solicitation Companion Guide, sample budgets, sample MOUs, tips, examples, and much more. Please review and use these resources. They are there to help you.

If you have any questions or any other additional programmatic questions, you can reach out to us, the OVW Rural Program, at OVW.Rural@usdoj.gov. For financial questions, you can contact GFMD at OVW.GFMD@usdoj.gov or call 1-888-514-8556. If you have technical questions related to Grants.gov, you can contact Grants.gov at support@grants.gov or call 1-800-518-4726. And lastly, if you have technical questions related to JustGrants, you can contact JustGrants support at OVW.JustGrantsSupport@usdoj.gov or call 1-866-655-4482. So, next slide, please. Okay.

We will now move into the Q&A section of this webinar. Although we cannot provide input on specific projects, we will do our best to respond to all questions. Please add your questions to the Q&A box and not the chat so we can more accurately keep track of questions and responses. So, next slide. Okay. Thank you again for your interest in the fiscal year '24 Rural Program Solicitation. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us via the Rural inbox with any additional questions. So, if anybody has any questions, if you could please put that in the Q&A box now. Thank you.

STEVI BLACK: Thanks, Holly. So, we've been seeing some questions come in. Thank you. We're doing our best to respond to some in the Q&A, but we will also take some time to answer some questions live for everyone. So, we will go through questions in the Q&A, and we will compile these as well that will be posted on the website. But I'm going to go ahead and get to some of these questions. The first person is asking, "Must nonprofits, non-Tribal serving as lead applicants be direct victim service providers?" Rachel, do you have a response for that one?

RACHEL STRASINGER: Sure. All projects must include a victim service provider as either a partner or a lead applicant.

STEVI BLACK: Thank you. All right. So, someone else has asked, "Our county is partially rural, would we qualify?" Rachel, I'm going to turn this over to you.

RACHEL STRASINGER: Thanks. The only way to determine that would be to walk through the rural service area eligibility documentation process that was briefly demonstrated in this presentation. And there's a full set of instructions that the solicitation links to to walk you through this project. So, in general, partially rural counties could qualify, but the only way to know for sure will be to walk through that process for the specific county you are considering.

STEVI BLACK: Thank you. And just so folks know, that's also on page 27 of the solicitation, you'll be able to access the instructions on determining rural service eligibility. Going through all the questions here. So, someone has a question about the SANE Initiative. "If submitting two separate applications, I'm assuming that would be for the SANE Initiative and the Rural application, does that mean we need two separate MOUs and standard forms?" Rachel?

RACHEL STRASINGER: Correct.

STEVI BLACK: Okay.

RACHEL STRASINGER: Correct. If applying for both sort of regular Rural Project and the SANE Initiative, those are two full complete and separate applications. So, all of the same attachments would be required, all the same pieces that are spelled out in the solicitation would be required for both applications.

STEVI BLACK: All right. Someone else asked, "How do I get a real person to help with setting up a UEI number?"

RACHEL STRASINGER: I would suggest starting with the SAM.gov contact listed -- that is the beginning of that process. And just to save any sort of scrambling or trying to figure it out, that is not a website or a process that OVW manages at all. So, you would get the fastest answer by going to the resources listed here, which are the only resources we have to direct you to.

STEVI BLACK: As we said before, these slides will also be posted on the website, so you'll be able to refer back to some of those resources as well. And the contact for that is also in the solicitation, right, Rachel?

RACHEL STRASINGER: Yes.

STEVI BLACK: The SAM.gov? Okay.

RACHEL STRASINGER: Yes.

STEVI BLACK: I know it can be frustrating, that's why we really encourage you to start that process as soon as possible. So, someone else asked, "For clarification, are the numbered headings the subheadings?" I don't know if you want to...

RACHEL STRASINGER: Yes. I would consider the subheading the sort of numbered items within the Proposal Narrative. And just to note that for the sake of saving space, you don't have to sort of write out the whole question. You could sort of reduce it to keywords for the question. The idea is really just to signal to application reviewers what question your information is responding to, just to make it clear to everyone.

STEVI BLACK: Thank you. Okay. Carol, I don't know if you're comfortable coming off mute, but you had a question about eligibility of nonprofit status.

CAROL: Yeah. So, we're actually more of a collaboration. We are a state-funded university working in collaboration with a nonprofit hospital, working in collaboration with our local centers who prefer that the replication run through us because of capacity. And we have a stronger financial capacity. But we applied last year, and we were told we weren't eligible because we were a nonprofit, but not a 501(c)(3), but I couldn't see where it said that specifically on this year's application. So, I just had no idea we were a

different kind of a nonprofit as a hospital, but we are a state university who runs this program through a hospital.

RACHEL STRASINGER: Okay. So, the eligibility is not limited to 501(c)(3) nonprofits. I don't have any context for the answer you were given previously, but I can clarify that no, it's both public and private nonprofits are eligible to apply. So, the designation may be different than a 501(c)(3).

CAROL: Thank you very much.

STEVI BLACK: Thank you for coming off mute, Carol. I just wanted to make sure we understood your question. So, this goes back to a similar question earlier, Rachel. "I understand that partially rural counties could qualify and how to find which of your areas are rural, but can you only serve individuals who live in the rural census tracts?"

RACHEL STRASINGER: So, Rural funds can be used to both provide services within eligible census tracts. It could also be used to serve survivors from within eligible census tracts. For example, it may be that a hospital, which is not located in a--in a rural-designated census tract is serving survivors from rural-designated census tracts. And that would be allowable. So, the qualifiers are the services that are provided within an eligible service area for the process discussed here, or the service is provided to eligible survivors from those census tracts.

STEVI BLACK: Thank you. And I know we know it can be confusing, that's why we're keeping our email up here on the slide as well as you continue working on your application. You can reach out. Okay. All right. So, we have a lot of eligibility questions or rural eligibility. So, I'll just go back to some of those. Someone asked, "After doing the rural census in U.S. Census, our county has five of nine areas that meet the rural requirements. Does this mean we would qualify?"

RACHEL STRASINGER: So, it would mean that you are qualified to provide services within those specific census tracts or to survivors from those specific census tracts.

STEVI BLACK: Thank you. Okay. Someone had asked about TA providers for the Rural Grant. We do have TA providers, but they wouldn't be able to help you write your application or anything like that, but we do have TA providers who have all sorts of resources and support. So, I'm going to go ahead and put a link to our TA website where you can find some of the Rural TA providers. We have multiple. I'm also happy to send some follow-up information there. So, you can always reach out to us at the Rural mailbox if there's someone specific you're looking for, or a specific type of technical assistance. We can certainly connect you with some support.

Okay. So, someone had a question about Letters of Support. They said, "Do I understand correctly that general Letters of Support should not be submitted with the Rural Program applications?"

RACHEL STRASINGER: Correct. Unless you meet one of the criteria explicitly stated that would allow you to submit a Letter of Support, you would need to submit a Memorandum of Understanding.

STEVI BLACK: Yeah. And I just wanted to add, sometimes we've seen people submit multiple Letters of Support -- just beyond the MOU. And those will not be scored as part of your application. So, just review the solicitation and the sections and what the points are for each section.

RACHEL STRASINGER: Thanks for that reminder, Stevi. Nothing that has not been requested in the solicitation. Any additional attachments will not be scored or reviewed.

STEVI BLACK: Okay. So, another question about eligibility -- "Are census tracts the same one with counties?"

RACHEL STRASINGER: No. Within counties, there are census tracts.

STEVI BLACK: It's kind of confusing. I'm going to just put in the chat again, a really helpful updated instruction sheet that we put together around how to determine eligibility. And this will walk you through how to do it on the census website, as well as what needs printed off for the application. So, please look through that entire document and follow that. And that will tell you sort of how to determine the county or the census tracts. And definitely reach out if you have any issues with that.

Okay. Let's see. And not to put you on the spot, Rachel, or if anyone else or Krista wanted to share. Someone asked, and a couple people upvoted this, "Can you give us some examples of initiatives that have been proposed in the past successful grant proposals?"

KRISTA BLAKENEY-MITCHELL: Yes. And I just wanted to clarify, too, initiatives versus grant projects. I can definitely speak to some of our successful applicants that have come in with grant projects that were funded. And there's a wide range. We do have projects that we fund where there is a partnership with the hospital, where the hospital could be the lead applicant where services are provided in junction to the hospital facility and in partnership as far as a referral. So, we've had projects we've funded in the past in addition to what we would call a traditional project where there are direct services being provided by an entity. And they have used grant funding to hire advocates, hire bilingual advocates, or hire or partner with legal services to be provided to the clientele that they're serving.

Also, we've funded child advocacy projects where there are mobile units used to go into communities and provide services to survivors and victims of domestic violence and sexual assault where children are also involved, unfortunately, in those situations. As far as initiatives, this solicitation, which we're so excited about, the same initiative is one of our first ones to be supported through the Rural Program, and we're looking to see what we get on that scale. But there have been some sexual assault type of initiative projects

that we've funded because if you note in the solicitation, the funding cap for projects that are doing sexual assault work is a bit higher than the other cap. And so, because of that, we have seen that there has been more of a combination of services, what we call dual services where they're looking at providing sexual assault, as well as domestic violence services under one entity. So, we've seen that expansion happen and being done pretty well.

STEVI BLACK: Thanks, Krista. I think we have pretty diverse projects that get funded with Rural. So, we're always excited to see what people are proposing to address. So, thank you. Okay. Let's see. So, speaking of initiatives, someone asked, "Can we ask for pediatric SANE training in a new Rural Grant application as we have a SANE Program not eligible for the SANE Initiative funding? But we have a need for additional SANE training for pediatric SANE certification." So, I would say, it's hard. I don't know. Rachel, sorry, what were you going to answer?

RACHEL STRASINGER: It's okay. It's okay. Go ahead, Stevi.

STEVI BLACK: Oh, no. I was just going to say, I think in this solicitation you can include, SANE initiatives in your regular Rural application if you are not starting a new initiative for SANE. So, that sounds like something that would be eligible. I would just make sure to review the solicitation fully. But we do have other rural programs that do provide SANE training and SANE support in their current rural programs. So, feel free to reach out to us again if that didn't answer your question.

RACHEL STRASINGER: And I am just going to reiterate one more time that regular Rural applications can support SANE and SART activities and SAFE activities as well. The SANE Initiative is really meant to support new SANE projects that are not currently operational. And again, there will only be a handful selected. So, if you have services like that, you are certainly welcome to include them in your regular Rural application.

STEVI BLACK: Thank you. So, someone had a question around the equity and Tribal sovereignty priority area, and they asked if a farm worker community could qualify under that priority area. And I think that could qualify under ethnic or racial underserved communities. So, I would just review the full underserved definition, which I was trying to pull up for you. I know part of that is on page 55 of the solicitation and then, you know, it's still aligned with the rural purpose areas and strategies. So, just linking back to the additional information in the solicitation -- but in terms of farm worker community, I think that that might fit under underserved. Do you have anything to add, Rachel?

RACHEL STRASINGER: No.

STEVI BLACK: Okay. Perfect. So, someone else has asked --they're a law enforcement agency, a sheriff's office -- would funding detective wages and benefits qualify if the bulk of their cases are sex crimes? So, would that be an eligible expense?

RACHEL STRASINGER: Yes, it would. I would just suggest that you make sure that you're pairing those services as required and collaborating as required with the victim service provider.

STEVI BLACK: Let's see. And we've answered some of the questions around the rural census tracts and counties, but please let us know if you still have any questions about that. Okay. Sorry. I saw one that I missed. Here's the question. "As a nonprofit lead applicant in partnership with Tribal law enforcement, including an MOU to provide victim advocates within their police department, do we still need to provide documentation for rural eligibility, or would this be considered a Tribal application?" So, it sounds like Tribal law enforcement does not have the capacity to apply or administer this grant. And if needed, they would get a letter approving us to apply on the Tribe's behalf.

RACHEL STRASINGER: So, I think partnering with a Tribe is different than the Tribe being the lead applicant. If the application is being put forth by a Tribe, then the eligibility documentation is not required for the rural service area. If a nonprofit will be the applicant, then yes, that documentation will need to be submitted with the application.

STEVI BLACK: Thank you. And, Krista, we might need you for this one. We'll see. Someone asked, "I know it was mentioned in the webinar a bit about human trafficking, but not mentioned in the application. Can funds be used for investigation, prosecution, and services to victims of human trafficking?"

KRISTA BLAKENEY-MITCHELL: The short answer is yes. But make sure to pay attention to the application requirements as far as your partnerships in this. You will have to meet the partnership requirements. But if you have any other questions specifically about the type of project that you are thinking about proposing, I recommend sending that into the OVW Rural mailbox. But the larger answer is yes.

STEVI BLACK: Thanks, Krista. So, someone asked, "Is there a minimum number of people OVW wants served in this program?" No. For your individual project, just look through the project narrative requirements, answer the questions, and reflect on the need based on what you're able to provide. We have very rural programs in different parts of the country, so we don't expect to serve the same number of people as other rural areas. So, anything else to add Rachel or Krista?

RACHEL STRASINGER: No. That's a good answer.

STEVI BLACK: And it's all about your service area and what you tell us about the needs there. Okay. "If a county law enforcement agency partners with their county victim services office, would compensation be required as a part of the MOU?" So, if the law enforcement partners with their county victim service office. So, I'm not sure if this person feels comfortable writing more information. I'm wondering if you're saying if the county is the main applicant, and would you have to compensate victim services as part of the MOU? Is that your question? And if you want, you can also email us the question

after, but I just want to make sure I'm understanding the question. I think someone said, they're both funded through the county tax dollars. And if you want to type more in the Q&A, that would be great.

RACHEL STRASINGER: Yeah. And maybe if a general response might be helpful, we generally expect to see the partners compensated. And obviously, there are collaborative and partnership requirements. We would expect to see some kind of explanation for why a partner wouldn't be compensated somewhere. Either they're funded to do that work or there needs to be some other explanation. But generally, we expect to see partners compensated for their level of effort and participation on each award.

STEVI BLACK: Okay. Thank you. Someone asked, "Is the budget level scored? For example, if you provide more services with fewer dollars, is that scored higher?"

RACHEL STRASINGER: No. Your budget would be scored on just what's spelled out in the solicitation. So, it would be reviewed to determine if costs are allowable within scope and support the project.

KRISTA BLAKENEY-MITCHELL: Yes, I agree, but kudos to you for being so efficient.

STEVI BLACK: Yes. Going back to budget, "Is there a minimum dollar ask?"

RACHEL STRASINGER: No, there is not. There are caps, but they are not minimums.

STEVI BLACK: Someone asked, "We are considering adding a vehicle to the budget to see if that would be approved. Under which budget category would we put insurance, gas, and maintenance?" Is Lisa still on here?

RACHEL STRASINGER: So, I think that would maybe be a good question to double check with our financial management division. But I think a lot of times insurance falls under contracts and some of those costs might fall under Other costs and some costs might fall under Travel. I think it just...

STEVI BLACK: I think Lisa did pop up.

RACHEL STRASINGER: Oh.

STEVI BLACK: Anything else to add, Lisa, for vehicles?

LISA: Yeah. So, there is a worksheet that we like to see. Sometimes rather than purchasing a vehicle, people want to lease a vehicle. So, we do have a lease versus purchase comparison spreadsheet. You can reach out to the GFMD helpdesk, and we'll send that to you. We like to see that attached to the application. If you're going to purchase a vehicle, that cost of the vehicle would go in Equipment. And as Rachel

stated, insurance usually goes under Contract. The other maintenance, gasoline, those types of expenses would go under the Other category.

STEVI BLACK: Thanks, Lisa. Okay. I think we've gotten through most of the questions. So, Miriam was asking, "How many organizations will be funded?"

RACHEL STRASINGER: So, we're not going for any specific number. If helpful, last year, we made 51 awards. This year, we anticipate making around 55. But really, we'll just keep giving out the money until we can't give out anymore.

STEVI BLACK: Is there anyone else that wanted to come off mute? Will you go ahead and raise your hand if you have a question?

CAROL: Actually, I just put in the chat -- Rachel, can I get that in writing that there are no restrictions on nonprofit status? It's just my agency. It's requiring that I get it in writing.

RACHEL STRASINGER: Sure. You can send the question to the Rural mailbox, and I can reply that way. But I will say that is how it's phrased in the solicitation as well -- that both public and private nonprofits are eligible and a restriction to 501(c)(3) entities is not in the solicitation anywhere. But I'm happy to put that in writing for you, Carol.

CAROL: That is great. Thank you. I'll do that. Thank you.

STEVI BLACK: Thanks, Carol. All right. I know, Arthur...I think you had your hand up next?

ARTHUR: Yeah, thank you. You mentioned 50-something awards last year, and I was curious how many applications were there?

RACHEL STRASINGER: Yes. Let's see. I want to say it was about 160 total were received, does that sound right?

STEVI BLACK: I think maybe around 150...

RACHEL STRASINGER: I want to say, like, 158 -- I think is the number that's sticking in my head.

STEVI BLACK: Yeah, that's pretty close. Kimberly, go ahead and ask your question?

KIMBERLY: Thank you. So, I have been asking a lot of the questions about the Rural. We live in a city within a county, so the city itself is not considered rural. I work on a college campus, but I've also been in collaboration with our county as well. This has been a need that we've had, but if I understand you correctly because our city is not considered rural, we would not be able to serve our two college campuses within the city because they're not considered rural. Is that correct?

RACHEL STRASINGER: That is correct. You could provide services to survivors from rural eligible communities at those sites, but yeah, services provided in the sites themselves to survivors who are not from rural eligible areas would not be allowable.

KIMBERLY: Okay. Thank you.

STEVI BLACK: Thanks, Kimberly. Okay. Someone asked in the Q&A, "Who are the peer reviewers?" That's a really good question. So, you can also find information on peer review on the OVW website. But peer reviewers are experts in the field. We, in the Rural Unit, try to get people who live in rural communities who have done this work in rural communities, so they understand the issues. We try to get peer reviewers from all over the country. We have a diverse group of folks who can come in and review these applications and understand what this work looks like on the ground. So, there might be advocates, law enforcement, SANE nurses, sexual assault advocates, some TA providers, but a lot of them are folks who some are rural grantees that may not have applied in the year. We wouldn't have people who are applying in the same year to be peer reviewers, but previous rural grantees or who have active grants. But we really try to get a diverse group of folks who are experts in this field and who understand rural needs and issues as well. Thank you for that question.

Okay. I think I just got a new one, a new question. "Our organization serves six counties, all of which are determined rural or partially rural. Can our ask concentrate on only two of the counties which are completely rural?"

RACHEL STRASINGER: Yes. You can decide within the parameters of eligibility that we have discussed here and, in the solicitation, where you will offer services. And possibly there are other configurations you might think through -- perhaps those two counties, if they're close to survivors in other eligible counties, could be getting the services in those two sites. So, I understand the lack of continuity across, right? Across census tracts or whatever creates some sort of weird gaps for applicants. But there are lots of different ways to sort of try to cobble things together to make sure that services are accessible to survivors. And these are funds that can be used to minimize barriers like transportation to get an eligible survivor to an eligible service site. So, we just encourage everyone to be creative in thinking about how best to leverage the resources in their own community along with OVW funds to get survivors where they need to be to get the services that they need.

STEVI BLACK: Well, I think we've gotten through the questions. If you have additional questions, please reach out to us at the website listed on the slide. The full recording and PowerPoint will be available on the OVW website. Just go to the OVW website where you found the solicitation and under resources for applicants, you can find all of this information. So, thank you so much for attending today and please reach out to us if you have any additional questions or concerns.