

OVW Fiscal Year 2024 Restorative Practice Pilot Program Evaluation Pre-Application Information Session Transcript

OLIVIA STORZ: Good afternoon or good morning, depending on where you're joining, and welcome to the Office on Violence Against Women fiscal year 2024 pre-application information session for the Restorative Practice Pilot Evaluation solicitation. On behalf of the Office on Violence Against Women's Performance Assessment Research and Evaluation Team, I am so excited to welcome you to this call. I'm really excited to share more about this solicitation. My name is Olivia Storz, and I am a Program Analyst at OVW and a member of the Research and Evaluation Team. I'm joined by my colleagues, Associate Director Ginger Baran, Kia Jackson, and Caitlyn Largent. I also want to thank you for joining us. As a reminder, this session is intended to answer some questions, but please know that you can reach out to us with questions at any time.

So, a little bit about the Office on Violence Against Women, OVW is a component of the US Department of Justice. It was created in 1994 and administers grant programs authorized by the Violence Against Women Act. OVW grants support coordinated community responses to hold offenders accountable and serve victims. Before we begin, it might be helpful to have the Restorative Practices Pilot Program Evaluation solicitation in front of you for a point of reference during this information session. There will be a lot of information to cover, so we will periodically stop to allow for questions. However, there will be moments when we need to move on to ensure all information is covered before the end of the webinar. The purpose of the pre-application information session is to highlight a few key points in the solicitation. However, it is not the intent, nor is there sufficient time to go over every aspect of the solicitation. Therefore, the agenda for this session is to cover the following.

We may be unable to address all of the information included in the PowerPoint. However, the slides will be posted for your reference. We kindly ask that you submit all questions in the Q&A box to ensure that we can capture them. We will read the questions aloud to let participants know which questions we are responding to. We will also try not to repeat the question if it has already been asked, so your attention to the questions and answers is important. And then, we will also pause throughout the presentation to answer questions as time allows.

Before we dive into the details of this solicitation, I hope to draw your attention to the terminology that is used throughout the solicitation and in this presentation. These terms may differ from those OVW typically uses in solicitations. This language is intended to reflect the methods and approaches of restorative practices. The first is an acronym. RPPP, that acronym refers to the Restorative Practices Pilot Program of which this evaluation solicitation is a component. Thus forth, I will be referring to this program as the RPPP. I might forget a P every once in a while, but that is to save time. We also use the term "harm-doer," which refers to the person committing the act of harm. In another context, this may be the defendant or abuser. "Person harmed" refers to the person who was harmed. This may be multiple people and is similar to victim or survivor.

Participants, which is a term referenced throughout the solicitation refer to all those involved in a restorative practice process and program. This includes victims of a harm, harm-doers, secondary victims or family members, community members, institutions, training and technical assistance, or TTA providers, and pilot site practitioners.

Next, I'll provide an overview of the RPP Evaluation solicitation. The purpose of the R&E Initiative, of which the RPP Evaluation is a component, is to research and evaluate approaches to preventing and addressing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The program is designed to support researcher-practitioner partnerships to study VAWA-funded strategies for serving victims and holding offenders accountable.

It is important to note that the 2022 Violence Against Women Act authorized the Pilot Program on Restorative Practices at 34 USC 12514. Please refer to the authorizing statute for more details on how restorative practices are defined and outlined. In general, we recommend that applicants review the authorizing statute for an understanding of the program. This solicitation reflects a component of OVW's inaugural investment and restorative practices and is an evolving program that is closely based on the authorizing statute.

The RPPP Program includes three components. This solicitation only covers one component of the program, the evaluation component, but applicants should understand all components of the program. For reference, please see pages seven and eight of the solicitation. The three components include training and technical assistance, or TTA, pilot sites, and evaluation, to which this solicitation pertains. I am not going to read all of these slides and their entirety for the interest of time, but please see the solicitation for further details on the pilot sites. OVW is funding the TTA and the pilot sites through separate funding announcements. This solicitation is only for the evaluation. This slide describes the training and technical assistance solicitation. Please see that solicitation, which has been posted, and its authorizing statute for further details.

Now we get to our components, evaluation. This fiscal year, 2024, RPP Evaluation solicitation invites applicants to conduct research and evaluation on restorative practices in collaboration with pilot sites and TTA providers. The pilot sites and TTA providers, again, will be funded under separate funding announcements. This solicitation is intended to exclusively fund research and evaluation. This evaluation effort is intended to fulfill statutory requirements, as we discussed on a prior slide. Evaluation is also essential for informing future funding, policy, and practice. Reporting requirements in the authorizing statutes specify the information that reports to Congress must provide. Restorative practices may use a variety of procedures and measures that are unique to the harm caused and the community affected. RPP Evaluation applicants should be able to balance competing priorities and develop research designs that complement the aims of restorative practices. RPP Evaluation recipients will evaluate the pilot and TTA projects with the expectation that the approaches the pilot sites use and the objectives and outcomes they target may shift as a result of adaptations throughout the duration of their projects. So, this is a brief summary of what we are

looking to fund, and the approach of the evaluation of the restorative practices. We'll go through more details in this solicitation moving forward.

The core research questions. This solicitation identified core search questions as well as additional research questions in consultation with the authorizing statute and the OVW director. Please see the core questions on page nine of the solicitation. These core research questions that the program statute compels us to explore, so the project must yield findings relating to those questions followed by other research questions of interest to OVW. Importantly, we do not expect the recipient of the evaluation award to answer all of these questions. So, the questions that are identified on this slide here are our core research questions, including things like, "To what extent are victims of a harm satisfied with restorative practice services?" The statute also requires OVW to gather other qualitative and quantitative information determined by the director. To this end, OVW is interested in applications that aim to answer some but not necessarily all of these identified questions. For more details, please see pages nine and ten of this solicitation.

These slides articulate all of the potential other research questions we identify in the solicitation. Again, we do not expect applicants to endeavor to answer all of the proposed questions. Please find the list of out-of-scope activities on page 10 of this solicitation. I will not go into detail here, but please look at page 10 of this solicitation.

Next, we're going to go over some federal award information. A few details that are essential to know about this solicitation include, obviously, the Grants.gov opportunity number, the award period, which we anticipate is up to five years or sixty months, the funding level, which we anticipate is about \$8 million, and the registration date. Please register at SAM and Grants.gov immediately, but no later than May 14th. Again, I emphasize that you please register for SAM and Grants.gov, the System for Award Management, immediately but no later than May 14th. The Grants.gov closing date is June 11th at 11:59 PM Eastern Time and the JustGrants closing date is June 13th, 2024.

As stated, the award period and amount is about \$8 million, which includes direct and indirect costs. Budgets, including the total estimated funding requested on the SF-424, must reflect that requested project duration. For more information on budget requirements, which I anticipate being an area of questions, please see page 17 of this solicitation. For more information on funding restrictions and unallowable costs, please see page 19 of this solicitation. It is critical that applicants follow all of the instructions in this solicitation and get started early so there's time to troubleshoot any issues you encounter. If you have questions, please reach out.

The following entities are eligible to apply for RPP Evaluation initiative funding. Nonprofits, including culturally specific and population-specific organizations with and without 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, private institutions of higher education, public and state-controlled institutions of higher education, and Tribal Organizations. Applicants should also have a history of comprehensive training and experience in conducting

research with victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Please see page 14 of this solicitation for further details. Thank you. These are all details describing what would be a disqualifying factor or what would be ineligible. Again, please see the solicitation for further details. I'm not going to go into specific details during our short time together today.

Now, we're going to go over program requirements. This section of the solicitation describes the program requirements including the methodological principles to which grantees must secure capabilities and competencies their research team is expected to have, regulations, and other important items. If you'd like to follow along in the solicitation, this information begins on page 11 of the solicitation.

This solicitation places particular emphasis on the demonstration of capability. This is due to the unspecific and evolving nature of the current pilot sites, meaning the pilot sites are not currently selected. This solicitation is looking for applicants who are able to demonstrate that they would have the capacity to lead a project that is evolving. For a full list of these, please see page 12 of the solicitation. This is a list of methodological principles. Again, please see the solicitation for any questions. However, any project funded under the solicitation must adhere to the methodological principles listed below. OVW will only support research methods that meet the following methodological principles.

OVW will critically not support research that, for example, is minimally useful to practitioners. Please see the solicitation for full details, but I will emphasize that this solicitation is specifically focused on ensuring that we have useful data for understanding the impact of restorative practice pilots. To this end, there are a variety of expected products that recipients and applicants should plan to effectively share their research findings. So, we expect applicants to share their research findings with a wide variety of audiences, most critically including research participants. So, victims and survivors or harm-doers themselves, pilot sites, policymakers, the public, as well as TTA providers. This is going to take a wide variety of formats including ongoing research dissemination. During that, it is expected that an applicant will share relevant preliminary findings or trends with OVW staff, policymakers, and other relevant parties, including pilot site evaluation liaisons. The goal of this is to ensure victim safety, promote transparency, and support program adaptation and improvement. There are also presentations, scholarly products, and research briefs, as well as a final research report. Award recipients should expect that all or part of the final report will be made available to the public. So, that's a brief summary. Please see the solicitation, as always, for further details.

Any recipient of an award under the solicitation will be required to comply with DOJ regulations on confidentiality and human subject protection. Applicants must submit a privacy certificate with their application, but they do not need to have IRB approval at the time they apply. Again, you do not need to have IRB approval at the time you apply. If you do receive the grant, you will need to provide documentation of IRB approval or exemption post-award.

Next, we're going to go over SAM and Grants.gov. Applicants must register with the systems listed below in order to successfully apply. This is critically a two-step process, and this includes registering with the SAM system, the System for Award Management, and Grants.gov no later than May 14th, 2024. And then, also registering with JustGrants. Registration with SAM and Grants.gov must be completed before an applicant can register in JustGrants, so please just be aware of that timing. That definitely tends to trip folks up, so, again, please just make sure that you begin the registration process and that all of your accounts are active and up to date by May 14th. Please see the solicitation for more details on registering, which is on pages 25 and 27. For the sake of time, I will not be reading in detail many of these slides, but again, please see the solicitation for details on information to complete the application for federal assistance. Please refer to the solicitation.

Right now, we're going to pause for any questions in the Q&A. I don't see anything other than that applicants must be based in the US. So, potential applicants are encouraged, but not required to submit a non-binding letter of intent by April 20th, 2024, to OVW.Research@usdoj.gov. Interested applicants who do not submit a letter of intent are still eligible and encouraged to apply. Now we're going to go over the components that are required in an application, which include a proposal abstract, proposal narrative, budget detail worksheet and narrative, as well as required appendices.

So, the Proposal Abstract should summarize the proposed project in plain language, including the project title, the purpose of the project, the goals and intended outcomes, and the primary activities. As always, see the solicitation for further details. The proposal narrative is really kind of the center of this application. And we're going to go over it in detail. But please refer to the criteria outlined for each section found on pages 16 and 17 of the solicitation. So, we have a variety of time constraints, so I will not detail every aspect of the proposal narrative here, but it is really important to read the criteria carefully and reach out to OVW if you have any questions. So, the proposal narrative includes a background, which is weighted at 10%.

Project design and implementation, which is weighted at 30%. Most importantly for project design and implementation, OVW understands that the pilot sites you are being invited to evaluate have not yet been identified. So, we hope a potential applicant will propose a potential design and understand that there are going to be a variety of checkpoints at which evaluators and project staff will need to check in with OVW.

Ten percent is also focused on the potential impact of this solicitation, which, again, is OVW's inaugural investment and restorative practices; the impact and relevance to policymaking of the solicitation are very important. So, applicants should articulate how the research will improve and support the ongoing efficacy of the pilots as well as the training and technical assistance that's being provided.

In addition, there is a capabilities and competencies section, which is scored at 40%, so nearly half of the application. This is a particularly important component of the proposal

narrative and should include a description of the applicant's qualifications to develop and conduct their proposed projects with key staff and partners, as well as qualifications pertaining to familiarity with restorative practices, mixed methods, and qualitative methods, participatory research, and other research methods that are reflected in this specific program. Again, in this section, an applicant will demonstrate their ability to adjust project design and approach to context-specific challenges and shifts in RPP programming.

The capabilities and competencies section continues because it is so important. There are a variety of different elements. A few I'll highlight here are demonstrated experience in effectively working with and conducting research with, historically marginalized and/or other underserved communities and ensuring access and equitable research participation for people with disabilities and people with limited English proficiency.

The final component is a dissemination plan, which is weighted at 10%. That's a description of the plan to produce expected products and make sure that findings are available for various audiences. So, this includes the audiences that we've already described in our list of expected products. I will highlight here that we hope applicants will plan to share findings back with the research participants themselves.

The budget narrative and budget worksheet. Please see the solicitation on page 38 of Appendix A, which includes sample budget information and budget information that is really going to be useful as you think about your budget. However, applicants must submit a detailed budget estimate and budget narrative and must upload the associated documentation as an attachment in JustGrants. OVW encourages applicants to prepare and submit budgets in a spreadsheet using Excel or similar software. Importantly, the budget worksheet and budget narrative are not scored, but are required for an application to be sent to peer review. OVW recognizes that because applicants do not know the pilot sites and how research designs will be developed after sites are selected, it is difficult for applicants to formulate a detailed budget. OVW anticipates working with the recipient to negotiate the project budget in segments with OVW releasing funds in phases. As such, it is understood that applicants' budgets are merely best-estimate in the absence of critical information and are subject to significant changes post-award. Again, please see page 38 of the solicitation. One additional note to add is in the past, we've seen budgets that include funds for incentives. Incentives are not permitted, but participant stipends are. Please keep this in mind if you intend to include stipends for research participants in your budget. This is really just regarding how research participants are compensated for the time that they spend sharing information with the researcher or evaluator.

There are several required appendices for this solicitation. These appendices can be submitted as separate attachments or in consolidated files in JustGrants. These include five different required appendices. Please consult the list provided on pages 25 through 26 of the appendices the applicants are required to submit with their applications. If an applicant determines that a particular appendant is not relevant to their application, they can attach a file with a statement to that effect. And finally, appendices do not count

against the page limit for the proposal narrative. So, that is to say, if you have a list of references, those references do not count against the page limit in the project narrative. Please, again, refer to the solicitation for more details on the acquired appendices.

There are additional application components that a complete application should include. The following components will not be scored but must be included with the application. Failure to supply this information will result in the application being removed from consideration. Some components will be generated during the application submission process, while others will be uploaded and attached to the application in JustGrants. And this is a list. You have a Letter of Nonsupplanting and Confidentiality Notice Form.

For the sake of time, I'll provide a list of the additional application components. But again, more information is detailed in the slides, which you will receive after this webinar. It's also provided in the solicitation beginning on page 25. Again, this includes the pre-award risk assessment in the Summary Data Sheets. This year, applicants will complete the Indirect Cost Rate and the Summary of Other Federal Funding.

This year, applicants will complete all questionnaires in JustGrants. Although the questionnaires must be completed in JustGrants, the questions can be viewed in appendices B, C, and D of the solicitation. Okay. And then, this list of disclosures and assurances, I'm not going to describe in detail, but please be sure to follow the formatting and technical requirements described in the solicitation. Check out resources for applicants on our website. Please reach out to us if you have any questions.

These are the details on how this should be submitted and formatted correctly. I'm going to pause now for questions, and I see that we have a few now.

So, the first question is, "Can you clarify the intent of this request for"--so this is a solicitation, not an RFP, "would be for an institution such as a university to evaluate a pilot program. However, which pilot program they will evaluate will not be known unless funded. Is that correct?" That is correct, and the details regarding what the pilot program will look like are available in the authorizing statute and described in some detail in the solicitation. However, the specific pilot sites and where they're located in the country, how they approach restorative practices, and what populations they work in. Those are not yet identified and will likely not be shared with the applicant until after the award is made. That said, there will be a planning period and an applicant is not expected to, you know, come up with an incredibly detailed and specific plan until it is clear what pilot sites are funded. This is why the solicitation places such significant emphasis on the applicant's capabilities and competencies to ensure that such an applicant is able to address changes and shifts in the pilot program.

So, it looks like that was answered. We're going to keep moving forward. And then yes, as Ginger noted, we anticipate funding up to 10 pilot sites, and further details are forthcoming. And please see the chat that pilot sites will not be selected or announced until about September 30th, 2024. So, that is after that evaluation solicitation is closed.

Again, submission information. The complete application package is available on Grants.gov and on the OVW website. As I keep mentioning, we highly recommend that you read the solicitation in detail, read the authorizing statute in detail, and then familiarize yourself with Grants.gov, SAM, and JustGrants. All applications must be submitted electronically first in Grants.gov and then in JustGrants. OVW will not accept applications after the JustGrants deadline except for severe inclement weather or natural or man-made disasters. And finally, it's incredibly important to note that the Grants.gov deadline is two business days before the JustGrants application deadline. Again, you will be submitting these in two steps.

Now, we've gone over most of the solicitation, and I'm going to be sharing resources with you. Hopefully, that can provide some detail on how you can move forward and answer some outstanding questions you may have after the webinar. The final thing I will add is that applications will be scored based on the degree to which the application responds to each section and addresses each element in the section. Furthermore, applications will be scored based on the quality of their response, the capacity of the applicant and any partners, and the level of detail provided. For more details on the review criteria, please see the application information section beginning on page 33.

Now, we're going to go over detailed contact information for technical issues. Applicants experiencing technical difficulties with SAM should go to this website, and those experiencing technical difficulties with Grants.gov should contact support@grants.gov.

Oh, I skipped ahead to the application review information. Please go ahead. So, this is the review criteria. This reflects the narrative component that we described earlier, and the application will be assessed according to how it responded to the review criteria. Then, there are a variety of resources that may be useful for you as well, including the Solicitation Companion Guide, resources for applicants, OVW Conference and Cost Planning, and program-specific solicitations.

Here's a list of the financial resources available: budget information and a sample budget detail worksheet. Again, this is a budget estimate, as well as uniform guidance and DOJ financial guidance.

For federal awarding agency contacts, please reach out to our finance team at ovw.gfmd@usdoj.gov and again, reach out to JustGrants for any technical questions relating to JustGrants. And then, for assistance regarding this solicitation specifically and programmatic questions relating to this solicitation, please email OVW.Research@usdoj.gov. Alternatively, applicants may call OVW at 202-307-6026. I am the RPP Evaluation Solicitation point of contact. My name is Olivia Storz, and you can reach me at Mary.Storz, S-T-O-R-Z, @usdoj.gov.

And I cannot emphasize enough, we are really open to answering questions, helping you walk through the solicitation, and pointing you to any available resources. To this end, we have provided a brief overview of this solicitation, and now we'll spend the rest of the time that we have available answering any questions that you might have, to the

extent that we are able to. And if we are unable to answer any of your questions now, we will also follow up after the webinar. So, this is an open space to ask any questions that you may have relating to this solicitation.

I see that there's a question in the chat that says, "This project seems more applicable for a big agency. I'm wondering if there are subprojects suitable for graduate students in partnership with the VA community." I'm not sure if that refers to the Veterans Affairs community or the Virginia community. Virginia? Great. "And if any past applicants have applied through smaller agencies." So, this is a first-time application. We do not have past examples to show you because this is a pilot program, and thus, it's the first solicitation of its kind. I will note that we don't have any specific requirements regarding the size of the agency, although the anticipated award amount is for one agency, and the award is for \$8 million which is very significant, and we would want to ensure that an agency is able to absorb and really address the nuances of this pilot. Ginger, do you have anything to add?

GINGER BARAN: That's correct, Olivia. I would just add that questions that applicants might be considering related to partnerships and subprojects and staffing the project, which sound like, this question is reflecting, are really at the applicant's discretion and all of the applications will be reviewed by external peer reviewers who will assess the merits of the application against the criteria and the solicitation. So, not only are we not permitted to speculate on how an application would fare through that review process, but we can't because it will be a matter of how the peer reviewers gauge the applicants' responses. We can usually speculate about whether something's allowable and permissible under the solicitation but not necessarily how favorably or unfavorably it may be looked upon.

OLIVIA STORZ: Thank you, Ginger, and thank you for the question. Does anybody else have any questions? I know that this is quite a long solicitation and certainly a new solicitation, so I completely understand and expect there to be questions, and some might come up after the solicitation.

I see one in the chat. "How are we proposing an evaluation pilot without knowing where the pilot activity will happen or what the pilot activity is exactly? Sorry if I'm missing something." Anonymous participant, that is a great question. And we really acknowledge the lack of clarity throughout the solicitation. Ginger, I don't know if you want to add something here.

GINGER BARAN: Sure. I would just like to say that we acknowledge that this is a challenge and that there are a lot of unknowns to contend with. You will see that the criteria set forth for applicants lean very largely on demonstrated capacity and competencies. We're looking for an applicant who has the demonstrated capacity and competencies to implement a project of this size, scale, and complexity related to restorative practices and program evaluation. So, yes, we acknowledge there are inherent challenges here. This award will be a cooperative agreement, which means that certain pieces of the project will be determined as more information is developed

and that pieces of the project undergo review, and negotiating of the specifics of each distinct piece once the information is more available.

OLIVIA STORZ: Thanks, Ginger. I also added the specific authorizing statute to your question. I highly recommend that applicants review the authorizing statute because while the details of the pilot program are not known, the statute does outline a fair amount of what we can anticipate with the pilot program. I will also add that the solicitation offers as far a summary as we are able to share at this time. Thank you for the question.

Are there any additional questions? Yes, the slide deck will be shared with attendees. "The Grants.gov site has always given me challenges, and I would appreciate tech support." Great. I will put contact for tech support in the chat, and I'm sorry to hear that you've had that experience. I definitely recommend, again, that you register as early as you can so we can address some of those tech challenges and we appreciate your work and your commitment to working through those challenges so that you can apply successfully.

"So, did the application cycle for the pilot program site already close?" No. It has not yet been posted and we do not know the exact date. However, the training and technical assistance solicitation has been posted and has now closed. I will say it will stay on for any additional questions, but we will share around the slides, we'll share around, you know, a list of kind of frequently asked questions as well and remain really available. I will put our email in the chat. Again, we're available to answer any and all questions. And the final thing I will say, and Ginger, I'll maybe leave it to you to close this out, is just this is a really exciting solicitation and is OVW's inaugural investment in restorative practices. This evaluation solicitation is really intended to help us have, you know, thoughtful data on this pilot program. I'm really excited to see the applications that you all submit, and we really appreciate your time and thoughtfulness as you consider applying and read our evaluation--or read our solicitation. Ginger, do you have anything to add?

GINGER BARAN: Just thank you, Olivia, and thank you, participants. And please know, as Olivia said, we anticipate that you will have questions as you're preparing an application. Please reach out. We treat all of those questions as top priorities in terms of getting you a good answer back as soon as we possibly can, usually within two business days, so please let us know as things come up. Thank you.

OLIVIA STORZ: Thanks, Ginger. Thank you all so much, and please reach out with any questions.