

OVC FY25 Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Human Trafficking Pre-Application Webinar Transcript

Serena Roche: Hello, everyone. Today's pre-application webinar for the OVC Fiscal Year 2025 Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Human Trafficking notice of funding opportunity will be presented by OVC Grants Management Specialist Natalia Aguirre. We'll provide an overview of one of their available grants. Thank you again for watching. Now, let's turn things over to Natalia.

Natalia Aguirre: Thank you, Serena. Again, my name is Natalia Aguirre, and I'm a Victim Justice Specialist in OVC's Human Trafficking Division. I'm pleased that you're joining me for an overview of OVC's FY 2025 Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Human Trafficking Notice of Funding Opportunity pre-application webinar. In this recorded webinar, I will talk about OJP; OVC's mission; the NOFO, including the NOFO focus, eligibility, and required documents. Then, I will talk about the application process and resources. It will be helpful if you are following along with the NOFO and taking notes to help when you are submitting your application by the deadline.

The Office of Justice Programs provides grant funding, training, research, and statistics to the criminal justice community. OJP is one of the three grant-making components of the Department of Justice, along with the Office on Violence Against Women and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

The Office for Victims of Crime, which is part of the Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, administers the Crime Victims Fund, which is financed by fines and penalties paid by convicted federal offenders and not from tax dollars. This funding supports formula programs to states, territories, and Tribes, as well as many OVC discretionary grant programs for victims of crime.

I'm now going to focus on the notice of funding opportunity for the FY 25 Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Human Trafficking. We have several [NOFOs] currently open, so please be sure to check our funding opportunities page. If you are looking to implement systems-level strategies to assist children and youth victims of trafficking, you will want to apply under this notice of funding opportunity. Before we dig into the NOFO, please mark your calendars with these dates. The Grants.gov deadline for this solicitation is March 11, 2026. And the JustGrants deadline is March 18, 2026. The anticipated start date for this award is July 1, 2026, and the project length is slated for 48 months.

As outlined in the OVC FY 2025 NOFO, eligible applicants are state governments and federally recognized Native American Tribal governments. For the purpose of this solicitation, "state" means any state of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. If you are an NGO or a private foundation, you are not eligible for this award and you should contact your state or Tribal jurisdictional partners to see if they are interested in applying. However, please note that NGOs can be subawards.

The goal of this program is to improve outcomes for children and youth victims of trafficking, with a focus on building collaboration at the statewide or Tribal jurisdiction-wide level to create improvements across systems. Please note that entities with current OVC Improving Outcomes awards with project periods that will overlap with the proposed project must clearly describe how the proposed project would differ from or expand their existing OVC- funded projects, including a new scope, services, cost items, or a distinct geographic scope not included in the original application.

The objectives of this program are outlined on this slide and include developing and implementing a jurisdiction-wide strategy to combat the greatest challenge areas in child and youth sex and labor trafficking within the state or Tribe; developing or enhancing protocols, procedures, and state- and Tribal-specific strategies to address child and youth sex and labor trafficking; and filling gaps in existing services and coordinating responses in existing anti-trafficking and youth-serving efforts, including those related to victim assistance, law enforcement, child welfare, runaway and homeless youth, and juvenile justice, among others.

Applicants seeking priority consideration should specify in the proposal narrative which of the following goals the project is intended to advance and how it will do so. Note: Addressing this priority area is one of many factors that OJP considers in making funding decisions. Receiving priority consideration for one or more priority areas does not guarantee a funding award.

Applicants can visit OJP's performance measurement page at OJP.gov/performance for more information on performance measurement activities. Selected applicants for an award will receive further guidance on post-award reporting processes.

The next two slides list activities that are out of the program scope and will not be funded. Please be sure to review this guidance carefully as you prepare your application. Additionally, as you prepare your application, be sure to refer to the budget detail form for further information on allowable and unallowable costs that may inform the development of your project design.

Again, note that these activities are listed in the program description section of the NOFO. These awards will be made as grants. For additional information, you can see the Administrative, National Policy and Other Legal Requirements section of the OJP Grant Application Resource Guide.

This NOFO requires a 25-percent cash or "in-kind" match on the total project cost. In other words, federal funds awarded under this NOFO may not cover more than 75 percent of the total cost of the project being funded. Recipients must satisfy this match with cash and/or "in-kind" contributions. "In-kind" contributions can be in the form of services, supplies, real property, and/or equipment. The Application Resource Guide has additional information on this match requirement and step-by-step instructions for entering match amounts in the budget.

To be considered for funding, your application must include the SF-424, submitted in Grants.gov, as well as a proposal narrative and budget detail form submitted in JustGrants. Your application must include a proposal narrative that follows all formatting and content requirements, as detailed in the NOFO. The narrative should be double spaced, use a standard 12-point font, have no less than one-inch margins, not exceed 20 numbered pages, and be submitted as an attachment in JustGrants. If the proposal narrative fails to comply with these length-related restrictions, OVC may consider such noncompliance in peer review and in final award decisions. Tables, charts, and graphs may be included in the proposal narrative and can be created in a legible font smaller than 12-point. However, these items will count towards the page limit.

Your proposal narrative must include the four sections listed here. Your application will be evaluated for technical merit based on how your proposed project addresses these criteria. An additional 20 percent will be assessed through your budget and associated documentation.

In the first section of the proposal narrative, you will identify the issue or problem you wish to address with this project. Using supporting information and data, you will need to demonstrate the needs impact on the target population and how it relates to the purpose of the NOFO. You will also identify any previous or current attempts within the agency or across the jurisdiction to implement jurisdiction-wide strategies to improve the outcomes for victims of child and youth trafficking. You should also include information on the agencies involved, the status of these attempts, the applicant's involvement in these plans, and whether these are federally funded by OVC or the Department of Health and Human Services Office on Trafficking in Persons. Finally, you will include a description of the applicant's history of partnership with key stakeholders in your jurisdiction, including who and what projects and which agencies, systems, sectors, and communities you plan on engaging in this program.

In the second section of your proposal narrative, you will identify your project's goals and objectives, and how these address the purpose of the NOFO. This section should include project goals; how the project will support the development of a statewide or Tribal-wide strategic planning process; and how the strategies implemented will be linked to identifying, investigating, and/or assisting child and youth victims of sex and labor trafficking and ultimately improve outcomes for child and youth trafficking victims throughout the state or Tribe. You will also include project objectives, how your goals and objectives relate to the goals and objectives of the NOFO, and finally, how the proposed project will enhance the jurisdiction's response to labor trafficking.

The third section of your proposal narrative should be the project design and implementation section. Here, you will detail the project activities that will help you meet your goal and objectives identified in section two. This should include what activities you will conduct to achieve the proposed goals and objectives; how you will deliver and complete those activities—describe how your proposed program will coordinate with existing anti-trafficking efforts, including any anti-trafficking task forces or multidisciplinary response teams that may be operating in your jurisdiction—

when the activities will take place—and be sure to describe the two phases of the project, phase one and phase two—who in the applicant's organization will staff the activities, including key staff, and you should identify a lead state or Tribal government agency and a main point of contact within that lead agency to coordinate the effort. At a minimum, one full-time employee should serve as a coordinator, manager, or director for the project. If the person designated as the one full-time staff employee is not staff of the lead agency, you should explain how they have the buy-in, support, and ability to convene jurisdiction-wide stakeholders, and how the lead agency will support the sustainability of the process and the project.

In the project design and implementation section, you should also include the roles and responsibilities of the lead agency and partner agencies and/or entities committed to the effort. Note that the lead agency should have partners and letters of intent and memorandums of understanding with the necessary partners or agencies needed to do this work. Who will participate in and benefit from the activity. You must describe how the perspective and input of human trafficking survivors have been or will be incorporated into the project design and implementation. The deliverables, reports, and other items that are produced as part of the project. Please be sure to see the required deliverables in the Deliverables section of the NOFO. And finally, if you plan to use subrecipients to help conduct the project, please be sure to name them and include their role in conducting project activities.

The final section of your proposal narrative should detail your capabilities and competencies that you bring to successfully complete your proposed project. In this section, you should include a short description of your capacity to deliver the proposed project and meet the requirements of the award, including collecting and reporting the required performance measurement data, who will be responsible for this task, and how you will collect the data. A description of multi-agency projects or activities that your agency has conducted or is currently conducting that demonstrates the ability to undertake the proposed project activities. The lead agency must demonstrate that it has the expertise and organizational capacity to successfully undertake a jurisdiction-wide initiative that involves significant collaboration with other agencies that it has partnered and that it has partners supporting and committed to engage in the effort. Finally, you should also include a summary of relevant experience of team members with key responsibilities for implementing the project, including the capacity and expertise of lead and proposed project partners to respond to all types of human trafficking. Be sure to include the qualifications that enable them to facilitate a jurisdiction-wide strategic planning and convening at the state level. You should indicate how the coordinator, manager, or director will be empowered to lead and manage the project.

Your application must include a detailed line-item budget using the JustGrants budget detail form. You may propose a budget that is less than the anticipated award ceiling amount. The budget should be reasonable to conduct the proposed project and be within your capacity to manage. The budget detail form collects the individual costs under each cost category needed to implement your proposed project. Applicants should ensure that the name/description of each cost is clear and provide the detailed calculation for

the total cost. Applicants should enter additional narrative as needed to fully describe the cost calculations and connection to the project goals and objectives.

Budget proposals should include the funding needed to implement the proposed activities. In preparing their budget proposals, applicants should consider what types of costs are allowable if awarded funding. Costs are allowable when they are reasonable, allocable to, and necessary for the performance of the project. You may propose a budget that is less than the anticipated award ceiling amount. The budget should be reasonable to conduct the proposed project and be within the applicant's capacity to manage.

Along with your budget detail form in JustGrants, your application may also require additional attachments. For those attachments with a current federally approved indirect cost rate agreement, you should upload it as an attachment in JustGrants. Additionally, if you propose a rate for a consultant on your project that is higher than the established maximum rate, then you will need to request approval before incurring costs at the higher rate.

You should also attach the following requested documentation in JustGrants: a time-task plan, which should include a description of the activities conducted in phase one and phase two of the proposed project; a logic model; resumes; and a Tribal Authorizing Resolution, if applicable.

Your application must include the SF-424 proposal narrative and budget detail form. In addition to these required elements, your application should also include many of the elements noted here. Please review the NOFO checklist carefully to identify which you should include. Use the checklist in your review prior to submitting your application.

To meet the basic minimum requirements to advance to peer review and receive consideration for funding, your application must be from an eligible applicant; not exceed the award ceiling; be responsive to the NOFO scope; include your SF-424 in Grants.gov; your proposal narrative in JustGrants with a 20-page limit; budget detail form, including your budgeted items, their calculations, and explanations in JustGrants. And remember, if you fail to submit any of these required documents, your application will not be considered for funding.

I will now share a brief overview of the application submission process.

Your entity must register with SAM.gov and obtain a Unique [Entity] Identifier, and you must maintain an active SAM.gov registration status at all times. For entities new to SAM.gov, the registration process can take time, so start early at any point during the year, and be sure your status reaches active before you need to submit a funding application. Renew your registration in SAM.gov every 12 months. Even if you've applied for federal grants before, you need to check that your registration is current, and if it's not, be sure to renew. Applicants who do not have an active SAM.gov status will not be able to complete step one of the application process in Grants.gov.

Also, be sure that your organization's point of contact in SAM.gov, especially the electronic business point of contact, or E-Biz POC, are current. The E-Biz POC may receive notices about time sensitive actions they need to take during the application process. The process for submitting your application begins in Grants.gov. Once you have located the funding opportunity in Grants.gov, you must submit the SF-424. This is the extent of the application requirement in Grants.gov. Once your application has been submitted and validated in Grants.gov, it will be sent to JustGrants for completion. It may take several days for Grants.gov to complete validation and release it to JustGrants. You will complete the rest of your application in JustGrants.

There are two application steps, each with their own deadline. We encourage you not to wait until close to the deadline to submit your application. Please keep in mind during the final step of submission, the JustGrants system will check your application for completeness. Unfortunately, we have had applicants fail to successfully submit their application because the NOFO deadline passed before this process was completed. Those that are completed after the deadline will not be considered for funding.

You may enter preliminary information in Grants.gov even if you haven't fully determined your budget or project scope. You will be able to edit and update all of your entries in JustGrants. Once you've submitted the forms in Grants.gov, you will submit the rest of your application JustGrants. The JustGrants submission should include all items that are required in the NOFO.

For technical assistance submitting your application in any of these platforms, please contact the appropriate help desk listed in the NOFO and at the end of this pre-application webinar.

After the JustGrants deadline has passed, OVC will thoroughly review all applications. As a reminder, this process only applies to competitive NOFOs. Non-competitive NOFOs follow a different process. First, we check to confirm that the application contains the basic minimum requirements that were described in the funding opportunity. For applications that miss these requirements, you will receive notice that your application has been eliminated from further review.

For competitive opportunities, peer reviewers who are subject matter experts assess the technical merits of an application. OVC staff then assesses applications based on factors such as geographic diversity, past performance, and whether applications are likely to meet the funding opportunity's goals and objectives. We then evaluate the fiscal integrity of the applicant, examine proposed costs, and determine whether the budget and budget narrative accurately explain the project's costs and whether those costs are allowable and reasonable.

Finally, OVC reviews potential risk presented by applicants prior to making an award. This pre-award risk assessment takes into account a variety of factors, including an applicant's financial capability and past performance. During the process, OVC may contact you to clarify program or budget details.

Applicants are often eager to learn how their application is progressing through the review process. Unfortunately, DOJ staff, including User Support and the OJP Response Center, cannot share any information with you until final awards have been made public.

If your application has been funded, specific JustGrants users for your organization will be notified by email and will see the award appear in their JustGrants account. If you receive notice of an award, you must take specific steps in JustGrants to accept it or decline it. The DOJ Award Acceptance Checklist on the JustGrants Resource website can walk you through those steps. If you are not selected for funding, OJP will notify you by email after all award recipients have been notified. You can visit OJP's Grant Awards website to see all OJP Awards made by year, program, and locality.

Applications submitted under this FY 2025 funding opportunity may be funded in future fiscal years, including FY 2026, dependent on, among other considerations, the merit of the applications and the availability of appropriations.

We have many resources to help guide you through the application process.

Grants.gov has a comprehensive Quick Start Guide to help you register for and apply to OVC awards. This guide includes sections on registering roles, workspaces, completing forms, and submitting your application.

The JustGrants website has a collection of resources available. Training materials, including self-guided e-learning videos supplemented by Job Aid Reference Guides, checklists, and infographics. These resources will help you learn to navigate the system to complete various essential grant management tasks during your application process.

The DOJ Grant Application Submission Checklist includes step-by-step instructions on preparing your OVC application.

The Office of Justice Programs Grant Application Resource Guide provides guidance to assist OJP grant applicants in preparing and submitting applications for OJP funding. It addresses a variety of policies, statutes, and regulations that apply to many, or in some cases, all OJP program applicants, or to grants and cooperative agreements awarded in fiscal year 2025. Some OJP programs may have program NOFOs that expressly modify a provision of this guide. In such case, the applicant is to follow the guidelines in the NOFO as to any such expressly modified provision.

The DOJ Grants Financial Guide is the primary reference manual to assist OJP, OVW, and COPS Office award recipients in fulfilling their fiduciary responsibility to safeguard grant funds and ensure funds are used for the purpose for which they were awarded. Applicants will want to become familiar with this guide. It compiles a variety of laws, rules, and regulations that affect the financial and administrative management of your award. References to the underlying laws and regulations have been provided in the guide as much as possible. The top 10 topics in the guide are listed here, such as

financial management systems, allowable costs, unallowable costs, federal financial reports, among others.

Visit the OVC website to learn about OVC's history and funding, find multimedia products, and register for upcoming events.

Today, I have given you a brief overview of how to apply to the OVC FY25 Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Trafficking NOFO. For further detailed training on application submissions, you can attend a live weekly training session, download detailed training slides, or watch a pre-recorded version of the training. Again, please be sure to start your application in Grants.gov and JustGrants as soon as possible to confirm you have access. If possible, submit your application before the due date. OJP will only accept late applications if an applicant can demonstrate that there was a technical reason they could not Submit.

So, you will want to ensure that you have plenty of time to address any technical issues you may encounter. JustGrants can be reached by phone at 833-872-5175 or email to Jistrants.Support@usdoj.gov. When contacting any of these system help desks, please be sure to request a tracking number so you can document that you sought assistance with your issue. This will be important in the event you need to document you had a technical issue that prevented you from submitting your application.

Finally, the OJP Response Center is available to answer questions about programmatic requirements of the NOFO. They can be reached by phone at 800-851-3420 or email to OJP.ResponseCenter@usdoj.gov. If you are a current grantee, we appreciate your understanding that your grant manager and other OVC staff cannot answer questions about an open NOFO directly. For purposes of fairness and transparency, if you reach out to us, we will have to refer you back to the OJP Response Center so that your question can be documented and addressed officially.

Finally, please keep in mind that the OJP Response Center is also who you need to contact within 24 hours of the Grants.gov or JustGrants NOFO deadlines should you experience any technical issues that prevented your application submission. Keep in mind you will need to be able to document any technical issues, which is why starting your application early and maintaining any tracking numbers, if you have reported an issue, is critical.

If you need assistance when registering or working in SAM.gov or Grants.gov, please contact their help desk directly.

And with that, thank you for your time and attention.

Serena Roche: Thank you, Natalia, for that thorough overview of this important funding opportunity. We hope you found the information presented here today helpful. If you are interested and eligible for this NOFO, here are the next steps to take. Access the NOFOs at Grants.gov and ovc.ojp.gov. Register in Grants.gov early. This process can take several weeks. Review program-specific application deadlines and requirements

and contact the OJP Response Center for Assistance. For more information about the Office for Victims of Crime, please visit ovc.ojp.gov. Thank you for your time and we hope to see you again.