

DARYL FOX: Good afternoon, everyone. And welcome to today's webinar, "Becoming an OVC Peer Reviewer" hosted by the Office for Victims of Crime. At this time, it's my pleasure to introduce Kristina Rose, Director of the Office for Victims of Crime for welcoming remarks. Kris?

KRISTINA ROSE: Thank you, Daryl. Well, good afternoon and good morning, depending on where you are in the world today. I'm delighted to be here with you to kick off this webinar on becoming an OVC peer reviewer. Thank you so much to all of you for registering and for taking the time to join us today.

For those of you who are not familiar with OVC, I'd like to take a moment to tell you about who we are as an agency. OVC is located within the Office of Justice Programs at the U.S. Department of Justice and we were established in 1988 through an amendment to the Victims of Crime Act that was passed in 1984. And our mission is to enhance the nation's capacity to assist crime victims and improve attitudes, policies, and practices that promote justice and help support the healing of victims of crime. OVC administers the Crime Victims Fund, which was also established by the Victims of Crime Act. And the money for the fund comes from fines and penalties from federal—federally convicted offenders, not from taxpayer dollars. And the fund really is what enables OVC to provide grants to states, tribes, and territories for victim services. So for example in fiscal year '22, Congress allocated \$2.6 billion from the Crime Victims Fund for victim services. And of that, 95 percent goes to what we call formula funding that goes to the states, to tribes, and to territories. Now five percent is used for what we call innovative discretionary programs and training and technical assistance to the field.

So with that discretionary funding, and then with the funding that we get for human trafficking programs, OVC manages a very diverse portfolio of programs responding to a broad range of victimizations included but not in any way limited to elder abuse, identity theft, terrorism and mass violence, interpersonal violence, sexual assault, and homicide, and as I said, many others. Now these discretionary programs are—and the human trafficking programs—are mostly funded through a competitive application process. And that's where peer review comes in. Peer review is a critical component of application review and it allows experts in the field to review applications and assist us at OVC in making recommendations on which grant applications to fund.

We know that those of you working in the field, whether you're working in tribal justice, victim services, prosecution, law enforcement, healthcare, that you have insight on trends and promising approaches that are needed to best serve victims. And it's that kind of input and understanding of the field that is so valuable in helping us make funding decisions. We also know that a disproportionate number of people who experience crime victimization come from underserved, underheard, underrepresented communities. And we know that for these and other marginalized communities, accessing services can be

very challenging and sometimes downright impossible. So we want to change that.

President Biden issued an executive order on advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities through the federal government. And I'm proud to say that OVC's priorities mirror the administration's priorities on racial equity and inclusion. At OVC, we aim to ensure easy access to victim services for all people who experience victimization but especially those in those underheard and underrepresented communities. And we strive to support a diverse range of services because we know that every victim experience is unique and that one size does not fit all. Recruiting peer reviewers that have diverse backgrounds and expertise helps us to achieve these goals and ensure that applications are reviewed by people who have the experience and the connections to the survivors from underserved communities across the country. So for example, if we're funding grants to improve services for persons with cognitive disabilities, it only makes sense to have peer reviewers who have worked with and understand the unique needs of this community. This is equally important when we are funding communities that serve Black and Brown communities, LGBTQ, those who are deaf, hard of hearing, and other physical persons with physical disabilities. We hope that this webinar will help you to better understand the peer review process and that it will inspire you to consider serving as a peer reviewer, maybe even recommending it to a friend or a colleague.

And I wanted to be personally involved in this—in this peer review webinar because this topic is so important to me personally. I've been involved in my career with peer review from so many different angles as a federal employee who has written solicitations, managed peer review, and relied very much on the expertise of peer reviewers to choose the best applicants from that solicitation. I've been a nonprofit, non-governmental peer reviewer providing feedback to government funders. And I've also been a potential grantee whose application underwent the peer review process. And I remember hoping that my grant application would be reviewed by peer reviewers who understood where I was coming from. In each of these positions, I've relied on that system to be one of integrity and fairness and I counted on peer reviewers to put forth their very best professional recommendations.

There are also other great reasons for being a peer reviewer. It gives you the opportunity to meet others in the field, to see what good and what bad grant applications look like which can also be very valuable, right? And allows you to have a say in how the federal government spends its money. And today you're going to hear from two individuals who—Cheryl and Jeremy, who have agreed to join us today to tell you about their personal experience with being a peer reviewer. And I don't know if I mentioned this but you get paid and it's not a fortune but you do get paid but we don't do these jobs for the money, do we? So with that being said, I am ready to turn it over to our next speaker and that would be Maria Swineford and she's going to give you a brief overview of the process of signing

up to be a peer reviewer. So I want to thank you all for being with us and I will be back with you again shortly. Thank you.

MARIA SWINEFORD: Thank you, Kris. I appreciate that. We'll take a minute to get our slides up here on the screen but I just want to first welcome you all to this wonderful webinar and thanking OVC and the opportunity to speak with you all and share in this—in this webinar and share information about the OJP peer review process. And what I'm going to be speaking to you all about initially is understanding the different roles and responsibilities around the peer review process so you all can get a better understanding of how it works internally within our organization so that the process steps make more sense to you should you become a peer reviewer.

So there's three main roles to our peer review process here at OJP. Kris spoke mostly around the program office role, which is a very critical role for the peer review process because the program office is the one that drives all of the selection of the reviewers, the expertise that they are expecting on the panel, and what the criteria is that the peer reviewers will be accepting applications against.

So the program office does a fair amount of recruiting peer reviewers. As Kris had mentioned, they are the ones that are developing the solicitations and establishing those program goals and objectives that peer reviewers end up assessing during the peer review process. They establish the criteria for scoring. They are the ones that are reviewing the backgrounds of the—an expertise and the diversity of the peer reviewers to select them for the panels. And they also play a role in outreach and engagements with sessions such as this, so that we can recruit as diverse of a pool of peer reviewers as we can and get as many experts into our field as possible.

The other role is why you're here. You're our peer reviewers. You are playing the most critical role in the fairness and transparency of the OJP awarding process. So as Kris mentioned, competitive grants is a very competitive process and it needs to be open, fair, and understanding. So having peer reviewers sit on a panel and assess the applications gives us an opportunity to have third parties in the field in different areas of expertise giving us feedback on the application so we make the most informed decisions that are going to provide our communities with the best services with our taxpayer dollars. So you're going to learn today from your roles and your responsibilities as a peer reviewer how to become part of the peer reviewer database so that you can get considered for serving as a peer reviewer. You also—once you're in the database, you would be responsible for enrolling on an annual basis to update your resume or update any criteria or demographics about your expertise and your background should you want to be considered in different areas across the criminal justice system. If you're selected for being a reviewer, you'd be responsible for reviewing and scoring the applications and then we're going to talk to you a bit about the evaluation process that is critical to our peer

review process. It's the only way we can improve and get better and be more transparent, and more fair, and more objective in our processes moving forward.

And then you're hearing from me today. I'm with the Office of Audit Assessment and Management. And we are an office within OJP and we manage the peer review contract that services the peer review oversight and logistics for all of the OJP offices, so including OVC. So here in OAAM, we are responsible for the contracts, and you're going to hear a bit more from those resources soon about the peer review process. We maintain the peer reviewer database. We maintain and establish all of the internal policies and procedures around the peer review process. We collaborate with the program offices, the peer review processes and on events such as this. We also play a role in generally recruiting for diverse pool of peer reviewers and then again peer reviewer outreach and engagement such as this.

So we have three different varying levels of responsibilities that really gives us a well-rounded approach to our peer review process. So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Melissa Vroom and she is with our peer review contractors and she will take you through the peer review process.

MELISSA VROOM: Thank you, Maria. Hello, everyone. My name is Melissa Vroom. I'm with Leidos. I work closely with OVC in assisting peer reviewers in the peer review process both with the JustGrants system and the peer review database. So just, kind of, giving everyone a high-level overview. Initially when you would like to become a peer reviewer, we ask that you send your request to be an OJP peer reviewer through a specified email account which we will provide later on in the slides and attach your resume or your CV. What you'll need to do at that time is you'll receive an invite to create an account in the peer reviewer database or PRD. You'll be asked to create your profile and update a current resume or CV to which OJP will review and approve the request.

When we select our peer reviewers, this is based on specific program requirements, reviewers will be identified in the peer review database and approved by OJP. Peer reviewers will be invited to participate via email from the peer reviewer contractor. When you're reviewing the grant applications, this is all done through the JustGrants system where you'll be able to access the applications and complete your assessments of your assigned applications. Typically at the end of your assessment of those applications, we will hold a collaboration session to discuss the applications that you've been assigned with your other fellow panelists. At the end of the peer review process, you will be able to evaluate your part in the process both of the peer reviewer contractor and of the JustGrants system. OJP staff and a peer review contractor will be evaluating the peer reviewers' participation as well.

We do have an annual effort that goes on where we do a re-enrollment or an enrollment of updating your peer reviewer account, so each season you'll have an opportunity to update your reviewer profile to make sure that your contact information is current and up-to-date along with your resume. And we do send out those initiatives at the end of the fiscal year to make sure that you're ready to go for the next peer review season.

And so how to enroll to be a peer reviewer? We do request that you send a resume or your CV to the OJP Peer Review Support website and this is managed by OJP peer review contractor. We ask that you please include in the subject line OVC Webinar so that we can identify any reviewers that will be sending in your request specifically for OVC but please note that you are available to be requested by other program offices that we support.

The OJP Peer Review Contract will initiate the enrollment of the peer review database, so you'll be receiving an email to start the process. Please note that if you've already have a profile on our database, you do not need to send another request. You can simply log in or request a password reset if you're unable to log in so that you can update your profile and make sure that you have a current resume on file. So please do not send in an additional request just for OVC. Please note that your profile is active and you are fully enrolled if you already have an account updated in our system.

And so again, an email, once you send in the request, will be sent to you as a new reviewer to the—with the link to the peer review database. You'll then create and complete all of the tabs necessary to make your account active, to which OJP will then go in and review the reviewer's profile and make your status active and searchable for any future peer review opportunities.

And so in this slide, I just wanted to show you just some screenshots and samples of what you'll see when you receive these emails. So the first one on the left-hand side is a sample of what the temporary email password from the system will be sent to you and what it looks like. And on the right-hand side is the login screen to the peer review management system.

And here's a few other screens that just simply show you what the profile screen will look like where you're going to enter in your contact information, personal information so that we're able to reach out to you and invite you to these peer reviews. And on the right-hand side is the list of your subject matter expertise. This is a self-reporting system to which you're able to click on any of the appropriate subject matter expertise that pertain to your background. And then the resume field at the bottom, that's where you're going to upload a current resume. We do use a field when searching for potential reviewers. It's the resume keyword search, and so it draws out the particular areas of expertise that you

have in your resume to help us find the best candidates for those solicitations to be a peer reviewer.

And so the OJP program staff will review and approve submissions to activate your profiles. If approved, the reviewer will be eligible for selection as mentioned before by all of the OJP program offices. So it's not just for OVC. You are open to be invited to other program offices that we support. And OJP program offices identify those respective reviewers by the specific experience and expertise reflected in your resume. So we do again ask that you have a current resume up-to-date so that we can search those resumes for those particular areas of expertise we're looking for, for our solicitations. When there is a match for an upcoming peer review, you will be contacted by email with an invitation and all of the necessary details for that particular solicitation. And I'd like to turn it back over to Maria to give you some more information about the JustGrants system. Maria?

MARIA SWINEFORD: Thank you, Melissa. I appreciate that. So very quickly on October 15th, 2020, the Department of Justice had shifted over and launched a new Grants Management System and new payment management system. So any of you who have been a reviewer with us for several years, you were very used to using the Legacy Grants Management System that we used for our peer review processes. In—for the 2021 fiscal year award making cycle is when we used JustGrants for the first time. As with any large transitional effort especially around technology, there are—we experienced several bumps and issues along the way after the transition period. And so the beginning of the fiscal year peer review cycle, there were a lot of issues that we were dealing with in JustGrants and working very swiftly to correct. In July of 2021, we rolled out several fixes and several improvements and enhancements to the peer review functionality in JustGrants. And then for the remainder of the peer review cycle which was July through August, we received very good feedback around the enhancements and how smooth the system was working at that time. The system is in a much better place than where it was at the beginning of the year. And we still continue to work on the entire system to make sure it's stable, make sure it's working as intended, and improving the system incrementally. So we are focused right now on stabilizing the system so that we can get through those and we anticipate a smoother year in 2022. And what I really wanted to mention is the evaluation piece. There are questions in the evaluation after the end of the—serving as a peer reviewer that does ask questions about using JustGrants and your experience with JustGrants. And it is critical that we get that feedback and we hear from you because that is the only way we know what to improve and what to make smoother in the future. So we're looking forward to the peer review cycle this upcoming fiscal year so that we can—we can see how well the improvements that we've made over the past year how well they're working and to get your feedback to continue to improve the JustGrants system for peer review. I think that's it. So thank you all and we'll move on to the next segment.

KRISTINA ROSE: Hi. I think this might be my cue. I would like to welcome Cheryl Francis and Jeremy Nevilles-Sorell, if they can turn on their screens and unmute themselves. Hi, Jeremy.

JEREMY NEVILLES-SORELL: Hello, Kris.

KRISTINA ROSE: How are you?

JEREMY NEVILLES-SORELL: I'm doing good.

KRISTINA ROSE: Good. Thank you for being here with us.

JEREMY NEVILLES-SORELL: Happy to be part of it.

KRISTINA ROSE: Good. And Cheryl, are you there?

CHERYL FRANCIS: I'm here. I'm having difficulty starting my video.

KRISTINA ROSE: Well, we can hear you and that's a good thing.

CHERYL FRANCIS: Great.

KRISTINA ROSE: So hopefully you'll—your face will just kind of pop on at any moment. I think it's wonderful that you both agreed to be with us today to talk about your experiences being a peer reviewer because I think unless you hear it from someone who's actually done it, it can seem like a very intimidating experience or it's one you can't even picture at all. So I'm going to ask you both just a few questions and just, you know, answer with keeping in mind, you know, what the audience here might be interested in hearing about your experience. So why don't we start with you, Jeremy, and I'll ask you why did you sign up to be a peer reviewer?

JEREMY NEVILLES-SORELL: So getting into this violence prevention field, intervention field, you know, of course you're thrown in and you got to write grants for your survival, so the stigma has like started way back in 1994. I was writing grants. And so I was about four years into this work and I had switched over, start doing more national work and I had heard about the peer review process. And people were encouraging me to go into it because they were saying, you know, you're at this point where you need to expand more, you need to move out of state and local grants and start looking at more critical funding. And so it was an opportunity to look at more federal dollars particularly coming out of OVW, you know, at the time.

KRISTINA ROSE: Yeah.

JEREMY NEVILLES-SORELL: You know, it was actually VAWGO at the time, Violence Against Women Grant Office.

KRISTINA ROSE: Ooh, you go back a long way.

JEREMY NEVILLES-SORELL: I'm a little dated there. A little aged on that. And so that was the interest of me getting into peer review was to expand my skill and understanding.

KRISTINA ROSE: Thank you, Jeremy. And I neglected to ask you to tell us a little bit about yourself and then I'll ask Cheryl to do the same.

JEREMY NEVILLES-SORELL: Okay. Yeah. Sure. I could say—I'll try to keep it brief.

KRISTINA ROSE: Yes.

JEREMY NEVILLES-SORELL: So I started up—I started out way back when—I actually started as a volunteer in 1994 and it ended up being a career. And so I come from a home witnessing violence and I always wanted to work with youth. And so I started out in—doing supervised visitation and start running a children's program and then start doing batterers intervention work and that led into more of the public policy, community organizing type work and then from '98 onto 2019, I was doing national training and technical assistance for native communities.

KRISTINA ROSE: Oh, terrific. Terrific. Well, we are very lucky to have someone with your background and experience as one of our veteran peer reviewers. Cheryl, are you—we still can't see you but I know we can hear you. So could you tell the folks that have joined us today about who you are and why you wanted to be a peer reviewer.

CHERYL FRANCIS: Sure. Thank you, Kris. I just want to note that there—this is a unique opportunity, the partnership between a peer reviewer and the staff of a federal agency like OJP to recognize the expertise that's out in the field. So for me, I've had a 40-year career in nonprofits. I can say I'm a survivor. My expertise—I started my career in city government and at the United Way where I receive proposals. Once I began to work in community-based organizations, it was incumbent upon me to write proposals to get funding for some of the programs that I oversaw. My career focused on addressing socioeconomic and criminal justice disparities in under-resourced communities, helping families in poverty, working with the un-housed, the unemployed and returning citizens. Currently, I work as an Executive Team Coach, working with boards and leadership teams on strategic planning and governance. And equity is at the center of my work these days.

KRISTINA ROSE: Oh, thank you for that. And Cheryl, I'm going to ask you another question and then I'm going to turn to Jeremy to answer the same. What have you learned from being a peer reviewer? What are some of the benefits? I know I mentioned a few of them in my remarks but I wonder if you could expand on that or bring up some new ones that I didn't mention.

CHERYL FRANCIS: Well, for me, writing a dynamic proposal that covers all the bases, follows the wonderful pathway and guidance that's usually incorporated in an RFP, being concise, coherent, and clear about what I'm interested in doing or what folks are interested in doing on the practitioner level is something that has whetted my curiosity about what other people are doing in the fields, informed my understanding of how all the dots are connected so that we get a response that's outcome-focused. Yet has some compassion and caring for the target population that also is very realistic in terms of its timeline and execution and has good leadership, has good management associated with it. So I've learned, again, how to connect the dots and how the guidance provided in an RFP really provides the pathway to doing so.

KRISTINA ROSE: Wow, that's terrific I—you said that very well. I don't think I could've said that any better. I don't know if I've actually thought about it that way, so thank you for that Cheryl. Jeremy. What about you? What have you learned from being a peer reviewer, but also what are some of the benefits that you've gained from doing this work?

JEREMY NEVILLES-SORELL: Definitely all the stuff that Cheryl said were my personal gains as a peer reviewer of skill—the knowledge, that understanding—helped tremendously in writing and focusing and really to follow an RFP.

KRISTINA ROSE: There you go. Uh-hmm.

JEREMY NEVILLES-SORELL: So the peer process though, the group and having the panel together to have, you know, it's typically three other—three people on a panel and so when we start to discuss the issues and the content of each application, the projects people are doing, you really get a lot more insight and, you know, and once you do work in this field for a long time you just can't pick up the same knowledge in a workshop anymore. You really have to spend time in-depth focusing on some of the minutiae at times and so there's a lot of openness and understanding and exposure to new ideas and concepts. And seeing the different ways people are doing work across the country, you know, it's pretty impressive that, you know, I have to say I was in a very unique position because as a—as a native person doing this work I had multiple areas because I had Batterers' Intervention, I had the advocacy side, I had supervised visitation, I do engaging men work. So I had a lot of experience.

KRISTINA ROSE: You must have been, like, everybody's favorite and everyone wanted you on their panels. I could just imagine it, yeah.

JEREMY NEVILLES-SORELL: Yeah. I was—I was an easy wild card, so I filled in a lot of areas and I got a chance to meet with a lot of different people, everyone from the—working with judges on panels to civil legal attorneys and to all of our frontline advocates. So it's an incredible process to learn and experience things.

KRISTINA ROSE: Yeah. And you touched on the networking piece of it that can be incredibly valuable. I've met so many people through the peer review work. I'm going to turn to Cheryl. Cheryl if you had some advice for the folks that are listening now or that may watch and listen to this webinar in the future, for them in considering Peer Review. What would—what kind of advice would you give them?

CHERYL FRANCIS: The best advice is to remember that this is an opportunity to make a contribution to the field. It is not an opportunity to—for compensation, although there is compensation that's available. The time invested as we've mentioned does have a payoff, but I can't minimize the time consuming effort of really assessing all the nuances and aspects of a 20, 25-page proposal. There's a lot packed in. For example, I spend at least three to four hours per proposal reading them to at least three times before scoring, giving people the benefit of the doubt, making sure I understand the trajectory for the target population in terms of program services. Really clarifying the outcomes and when there's a beautiful logic model laid out and when people include charts, organization charts, staffing charts and so forth, that helps. But the reality is that not everybody is at the stage of elegance in proposal writing and so sometimes the charge is to look for the jewel that—to look beyond the writing, to look for someone who has what I call practice-based evidence. They pretty much know what works for that target population. They're struggling to articulate what works. They're meeting the eligibility criteria that have been established yet need a few extra readings to truly get what they're trying to communicate in their proposal.

KRISTINA ROSE: That's—I think that's incredibly valuable advice for anyone who wants to be a peer reviewer, that we're not looking for perfection in every way, but what we are looking for are people that are highly qualified and have met the requirements of the solicitation. And you really do, you're right. You have to be willing to really take it all into consideration, right? Jeremy, last question, do you have some advice for our folks here?

JEREMY NEVILLES-SORELL: I think the—it can feel overwhelming and daunting when you take this on because there is—it really is that—no matter—I've done it for over 20 years and every time I start up with that first grant, it's, you know, like, Cheryl said it's four to five hours. You know, and they tend to speed up over time, but it's really about staying consistent and just move through the process because you can have, you know,

anywhere from eight to twelve applications to read and when you're doing in person reading, you're just stuck in a hotel room for three days. You're locked away, you know, it feels like punishment sometimes. And so being active, you got to take those breaks and even when you're doing it at home it's harder because you have every freedom to roam around your house. And so the—just keep working and being consistent as you go, figure out a way to work through it because it really is a lot of reading and you get worn out pretty quick from all—from the fatigue of sitting in a chair and reading and you really do spend about a good 10 hours a day reading.

KRISTINA ROSE: You can. No, that's exactly right. It is a time consuming responsibility. I want to thank both of you, Cheryl and Jeremy. And I'm being sincere about this that we are so fortunate to have such thoughtful individuals as peer reviewers for us and we are grateful for your service over the many years that you have been serving crime victims and helping to improve our criminal justice system but also, you know, your willingness to share with us and with the folks that are tuned in today and that may tune in in the future. So thank you very, very much and we look forward to seeing you this next peer review season and before I turn it over to Daryl to field your questions. I also want to thank our colleagues at Leidos and the OVC team and the team at OAAM for all of the assistance and the work that they put into this webinar, but also that they put into peer review and the process overall, so thank you and I'll turn it back over to Daryl.

DARYL FOX: Okay. Thanks so much, Kris. Thanks Jeremy and Cheryl for that insight. Informative. Questions are coming in, so just one reminder if you do have a question go ahead in the bottom right side of your screens like those three dots and then in the Q and A you can enter your question to all panelists. Go through those over the next 20 minutes or so. Just want to remind everybody there's several queries on will this webinar be posted and yes. So the recording, the PowerPoint, and the transcript for today will be posted to the OVC website, so keep an eye out for that. So for the panel generally—well, actually where is the link for the online database, this particular person and I'm sure several others have signed up years ago and would like to update their resume. That's something that needs updated or re-sent to.

MELISSA VROOM: Hi, Daryl. This is Melissa. So if they—peer reviewer does not remember their credentials to log in, they can send a request to the OJP peer review box that we can post where you're also requesting enrollment. And we can reset the account, the user ID is your primary email address, and then a temporary password email request will be sent to you to reset your account, and yes you will need to update a current resume, you did not have to send that to us. You can just go online and update and put the most current resume. Yup, the [ojprsupport@usdoj.gov](mailto:ojprsupport@usdoj.gov) is where you can send those requests. Thank you.

DARYL FOX: Thanks for that. The next question is, are there specific eligibility or ineligibility criteria to be a peer reviewer other than subject matter expertise, such as place of employment? Anything specifically you're looking for?

MARIA SWINEFORD: This is Maria Swineford from OAAM. I can answer that from a more general perspective. But if someone in OVC wants to expound on it, but yes, so when you are entering into the database, we have all sorts of categories that we're asking you to select some profile identification and demographics that expand around your subject matter expertise, your job expertise, your place of employment should already be in your resume. But there are dozens, really, of different demographics and different profile entries that we try and capture upfront, so that when the program offices are doing a scan of the database for reviewers that meet the criteria of their solicitation, we're expanding—we're getting as wide of a net as possible around all of the relevant experience that can benefit the reviewing the applications for the solicitation.

DARYL FOX: In light of the happenings over the past several years is travel required for peer review or are these completely done a hundred percent remotely?

MELISSA VROOM: Hey, Daryl. This is Melissa. So all of the peer review is conducted electronically through the JustGrants system and Beta Leidos sends out the materials, but everything is done within the JustGrants system. And so they're—just the collaboration call at the end is via teleconference. But there is no travel required. And everything's done within a two-week timeframe electronically.

DARYL FOX: Is a degree required to be able to participate as a peer reviewer or will work experience especially with Grants.gov and JustGrants qualify?

MARIA SWINEFORD: This is Maria again. I don't know that experience with Grants.gov or JustGrants is relevant to subject matter expertise. That's—I would consider that a little bit more of technical experience in using those different—those different systems. And then whether or not a degree is required to serve as a peer reviewer is going to depend on the expertise level that the program office is looking for, for that particular solicitation. So I would—I would say the answer to that would be that it would depend. But—and not all instances is it required.

DARYL FOX: What—as far as the overall commitment do people conduct full-time jobs along with this peer review? What's the timeframe typically if one is accepted to become a peer reviewer that they'll need to partake there for completing things?

MELISSA VROOM: Typically, when we send out a peer reviewer invitation, sometimes it's a few weeks prior to the solicitation closing. Once the solicitation closes, we do ask that you participate on an orientation call. And then shortly after that call, you'll receive access

to the applications and the materials. The review time to read those materials are typically between ten business days with two weekends included. And then we ask that you participate on a panel call. I know Jeremy and Cheryl had touched on the number of hours it could take and it really depends on the number of assigned applications. So once you commit to being a peer reviewer, and we have the orientation call, we do ask about a two-and-a-half-week timeframe from start to finish is typically the peer review range in which you'll be engaged in both the system and participating on the collaboration session at the end.

DARYL FOX: Here's a good question regarding eligibility. If a particular potential reviewer does work for an agency that receives current OJP funding, are they eligible?

MARIA SWINEFORD: So there is a point in the peer review process—this is Maria Swineford again. There is a point in the peer review process where we ask all peer reviewers to review the applications to identify any potential conflicts of interest. So if you have submitted an application under say an OVC application, there may not be a conflict with serving as a peer reviewer for, say the Bureau of Justice Assistance, depending on your background and your job experience, etcetera. So it would be a conflict if you are a peer reviewer—serving as a peer reviewer for a solicitation in which you submitted an application, you would be prohibited from being a peer reviewer to that. But that doesn't prohibit you for being a peer reviewer on a completely separate solicitation or even out of a separate OJP program office.

DARYL FOX: And then for the upcoming peer review season, do you have a particular amount—specific amount that you're looking to bring on to utilize? And when—what's the timing for that for the current season?

MARIA SWINEFORD: This is Maria again. I can speak to some of that. And then I'll have Melissa weigh in on the numbers. But most of our solicitations are being posted right now. And the earliest close dates we have for some of the OJP solicitations are early May. So we'll begin to start doing outreach and looking for peer reviewers probably around the mid May to June timeframe. And then that will continue through the summer, generally our solicitations are finished. And we're done peer reviewing in the late July early August timeframe. So that is about the period of time that we would be looking for peer reviewers and doing outreach. Again, Melissa, might be able to speak to the numbers in the past. But it's hard to try and estimate how many reviewers we'll need in a given year, because that is all dependent on how many solicitations get posted. And then how many applications we receive. So the number of applications usually determines the number of panels, and then therefore the number of peer reviewers. So it does vary every year.

MELISSA VROOM: Yup, that's great Maria and also to please remember that you are searchable for the other program offices. So, you know, while OVC has not posted a

solicitation yet, there are other program offices that are posting peer reviewer opportunities. So the sooner you get a request in to become a peer reviewer and update a profile and have it become active, the sooner that you could be contacted to potentially participate on an upcoming solicitation.

DARYL FOX: Thank you for that. Is volunteer experience accepted as part of the review criteria for eligibility?

MARIA SWINEFORD: Yes. I would—this is Maria again. I would definitely include that in the demographics in the selection criteria that we have when you are updating your profile or entering the database for the first time and also include that on your resume.

DARYL FOX: And how closely are OJP funding decisions tied to the peer reviews, is it solely or is there other discretion involved with ultimate awards? Or how involved are the peer review—is the peer review process with the awards?

MARIA SWINEFORD: I'm happy to take this one too. This is Maria from OAAM. They aren't the sole determining factor in making award selections. There are other varying factors. We do take geographic location into consideration. For example, we would not want to provide all of our funding to say one particular city, in one particular state, we would want to take into consideration the community needs across the country so that we are varying our community and we're spreading out across the country. We also, you know, some solicitations will address priority consideration areas that come into play. And then we do look at existing grantees and lots of other factors. So they contribute but they're not the sole factor for the final decisions.

DARYL FOX: Then during the peer review, how are the sessions scheduled or assigned around? Is it around people's work schedules or are they on a designated date, time set for those?

MELISSA VROOM: So typically for the orientation call is a recorded session so that if you're not able to make that call, which is usually during business hours, you do have an opportunity to listen to that recording throughout the entire process. For the collaboration sessions, again, most of the time they are done during business hours, well we do try to work with everyone's schedule on the panel, it does get tricky at times because there are several schedules to contend with, there have been a few times where we've done late afternoon, evening calls just to accommodate everyone's, you know, personal work schedules and things like that. So, we do try to work and have an understanding that everybody has other things going on. But we want you to be able to, you know, be able to participate and what works best for everyone.

DARYL FOX: There's several questions regarding conflicts of interest that have come in and generally is there guidance or a specific list that people can reference or just generally to speak to conflicts of interest and how they're handled? Are—what would prevent somebody from becoming a peer reviewer?

MELISSA VROOM: So certainly, when we send out the invitation email, we always, you know, we'll give the logistics of the review, but also say that if you have submitted a grant application for this particular solicitation, you know, you will not be selected to be a peer reviewer for that particular program. But we also send a conflict of interest document that we ask the peer reviewers to use when looking at their assigned applications. There is a list of potential conflicts that we ask them to report back as soon as possible. And then we work with the program office to determine if it's a true conflict of interest and if we're able to continue with them on that particular panel or to review that application. So those things are done right from the beginning, within the first two business days of receiving access to the applications, just to try to weed out any potential conflicts of interest.

We also use kind of like a method of assigning peer reviewers to review applications maybe cross region. And so we don't try to put you on applications from your home state or business location, again, to try to weed out any potential conflicts of interest. And then again, we certainly ask any peer reviewers if they're mindful of any, you know, organizations or things that they would be a part of, you know, certainly we would not assign them to a panel for that particular solicitation.

DARYL FOX: Okay. Thanks for that Melissa. And just a reminder if you do have a question please go ahead and enter that into the Q and A, we'll look forward to get to it, there's about a couple minutes left. Five to eight minutes or so left in the presentation today. And just a reminder as well the PowerPoint, recording, and transcript for today will be posted to the OVC website. So, if there's something you want to go back on to listen to, the Q and A, the formative interviews, or even the PowerPoint presentation you can do so there. Then when submitting application, do individuals just send the resume or also a letter of intent with that?

MELISSA VROOM: You can simply just send an email and certainly remember to put in the subject line OVC webinar, we are capturing and kind of tracking that. So we want to make sure that we're getting all of those requests in and you can just attach a current resume. Again, we will complete the enrollment process as far as nominating you in the system and then you'll receive a temporary password from the system on how to log in and start completing your profile.

DARYL FOX: And Melissa, do you know what slide—several people are asking for that log in site, to be able to click on for the meeting here. It's mentioned in one of the slide decks here.

MELISSA VROOM: For the peer review database?

DARYL FOX: Yes. But it—we will check it...

MELISSA VROOM: Yes, right down at the receipt—yeah, and to the left it says after receiving—hold on one second I'll put in the chat.

DARYL FOX: Okay. So that'll be entered into the chat momentarily for you all to click on as needed. Thanks Tammy, you had put that in the chat. And then typically this may have been addressed earlier, is it—how fast or what's the process once submitted through the system? Is there a turnaround time that's typical on hearing back if somebody is accepted?

MELISSA VROOM: So once the enrollment is complete, it then goes over for a review by OJP and so you don't necessarily receive a confirmation on email, but we do ask that you make sure you complete all of the tabs necessary so that your account is fully enrolled and active so that there's no delays in doing that. You can certainly check back to see if you're active and enrolled but it does take possibly a couple weeks just to kind of get everyone reviewed and approved. So there's no real timeframe to put on there, I'm sorry.

DARYL FOX: Oh, that did answer it well, so thanks for that Melissa. There was a comment that you answered perfectly. At this time I'm not seeing any more additional questions. We'll hang on for just a moment or so. If you have any last minute things please enter that in. Now regarding expertise although self-reported, is it recommended that applicants be in management roles to be peer reviewers or all types of service within organizations available?

MARIA SWINEFORD: This is Maria from OAAM. No, that would not limit you in anyway. In fact, we're—we want as diverse of a pool as possible. So any level of an organization that you are in is perfectly fine in submitting your resume and becoming—getting into the pool to be selected.

DARYL FOX: And if not selected is there explanation or outreach conducted to a potential applicant?

MARIA SWINEFORD: Right now there is—there is none—well, I think—and I don't have the exact number, but I think we are close to 10,000 if not more reviewers in the database. I'd have to lean on Melissa for that information. But given the questions that we have received thus far, I've actually made note that I think it would be helpful if there is something at least annually to let you know that you weren't selected and that, you know,

to look for the re-enrollment to be considered for the—for the next year. So that's helpful feedback thank you.

DARYL FOX: And as far as compensation, is it based on the solicitation reviewed or is it on an hourly basis?

MELISSA VROOM: So you are compensated \$125 per application that also includes participation on both the orientation call and the collaboration session. So it's not hourly, it's per application. And that's for all program offices that we support.

DARYL FOX: Okay. So I think we're nearing the end of today's webinar. We want to go ahead and thank—

MELISSA VROOM: Daryl?

DARYL FOX: Yes?

MELISSA VROOM: I'm sorry to interrupt. And I know this wasn't a question, but I did just want to make a note to everyone, when you are requesting your enrollment, and you're providing us with an email address, which is what we use as your user ID, we do ask that you provide to us an email address that's current, consistent, something that you think will not be a temporary user ID, if you will, because you do need to make sure that that's going to work for you for the JustGrants system as well.

The primary user ID could be a Gmail, an Outlook account, or something like that. I know, we do sometimes have folks that use a work email address, which is fine. But if you do leave, you have to make sure that you update those credentials in the system. And so we ask that you maybe use your best email address so that we're able to contact you and also it has to be something that we can use in the JustGrants system as well. So just my recommendations while work is fine, maybe a Gmail or some other personal email address, maybe the best way that we could contact you, you know, and just in case you do leave your place of employment. So that would be my recommendation when requesting for a peer reviewer profile. Thank you, Daryl.

DARYL FOX: Oh, great clarification. Thank you for that. Okay. So with that we're at 3:00 pm. We want to thank you for joining today's webinar, so in behalf of the Office for Victims of Crime and our panelists. Thank you for joining. This will end today's presentation.