

OVC FY25 Housing Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking Notice of Funding Opportunity Pre-Application Webinar Transcript

Serena Roche: Today's pre-application webinar for the OVC Fiscal Year 2025 Housing Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking Notice of Funding Opportunity will be presented by OVC Grants Management Specialists Kristin Weschler and Aaron Bryant and will provide an overview of the funding process. Thank you again for watching. Now, let's turn things over to Kristin and Aaron.

Kristin Weschler: Thank you, Serena. Hello, everyone, and welcome to the pre-application webinar for OVC's 2025 Housing Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking Notice of Funding Opportunity. We are delighted by your interest in wanting to serve victims of human trafficking and hope today's recording will be helpful as you prepare your applications.

As noted, my name is Kristin Weschler, and I'm a grants management specialist with OVC's Human Trafficking Division. And I'm joined by Aaron Bryant, a colleague on the Human Trafficking Division, who will co-present the material that we will be presenting today.

In this recorded webinar, we will talk about OVC's mission [and] the NOFO, including the funding opportunity focus, eligibility, and required documents. Then, we will talk about the application process and resources. It will be helpful if you are following along with the NOFO and taking notes to ensure you meet the application deadlines.

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

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 from convictions in federal cases 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. The office provides leadership and funding for providing critical direct services, analyzing emerging needs and existing gaps in victim services, identifying and replicating best practices, and implementing data-driven and technical innovations in victim services.

We will now review the content of [OVC's Fiscal Year 2025 Housing Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking Notice of Funding Opportunity](#). The NOFO was released on December 30, 2025, and is posted in Grants.gov and on the OVC website.

It is important to note that there are two deadlines that must be met to successfully complete an application. First, the Grants.gov deadline is February 24, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. eastern time. The second deadline is the JustGrants deadline on March 3, 2026, at 8:59 p.m. eastern time. We will emphasize these dates throughout the presentation and

provide additional detail[s] about what needs to be submitted in each system later in the recording.

It is important to note that the anticipated start date of the fiscal year 2025 awards under this NOFO is July 1, 2026, which is different from former NOFOs. Please ensure that you plan and respond to the NOFO accordingly.

An applicant may submit more than one application if each application proposes a different project and/or different geographical area in response to the NOFO. Also, an entity may be a proposed subrecipient in more than one application. Please refer to page 7 of the NOFO for more details.

The primary focus of this program is to provide rapid rehousing, which is defined as transitional housing and supportive services that assist human trafficking victims in moving as quickly as possible into permanent housing and achieving stability. Under this program, housing assistance must be offered to individuals for a minimum of 6 months, not to exceed 24 months.

In addition, projects under this program must be used for one or more of the following purposes: First, transitional housing, including funding for the operating expenses of a newly developed or existing transitional housing program; and/or short-term housing assistance, including rental or utilities payment assistance and assistance with related expenses, such as payment of security deposits and other costs incidental to relocation to transitional housing.

In addition to providing housing, projects must also include support services designed to enable victims of human trafficking and any dependents to locate and secure permanent housing; secure employment, including obtaining employment counseling, occupational training, job retention counseling, and counseling concerning re-entry into the workforce; integrate into a community by providing victims independence with services, such as transportation, counseling, childcare services, case management, and other assistance.

It is important to note that participation in the support services shall be voluntary. Please refer to Appendix A for the types of services OVC funds.

Applicants should also address how they will be prepared to serve survivors of all types of human trafficking, including both sex trafficking and labor trafficking.

And a final note. The majority of funds must be allocated for housing services. This includes dedicated staff positions that assist survivors in identifying and securing housing assistance and funds for transitional housing and rental assistance.

For some victims, and in some housing markets, the short-term use of emergency shelter or crisis housing may be required to facilitate access to long-term sustainable housing. If the applicant proposes a project involving some level of emergency shelter or crisis housing, the applicant must work with victims to identify longer term housing as

soon as it is safe and feasible for the victim, while also providing necessary case management and support services.

While a portion of funds allocated may be used for emergency shelter or crisis housing, it's important to remember that applications focused primarily on those services are out of scope of this NOFO and may be excluded from peer review consideration. Please see Appendix B for definitions and background on housing services.

Next, this slide summarizes who is eligible to apply under this NOFO. You'll see it includes government entities, educational organizations, public housing organizations, nonprofit organizations, and other units of local government. These are all detailed in the NOFO starting on page 7.

The goal of this program is to provide housing and associated support services to victims of human trafficking, as defined under federal law, by funding national and state and local entities.

There are five program objectives under this NOFO. The first is to increase the number and type of housing models, services, and programs available to serve various types of human trafficking victims. The second is to expand the types of services provided. The third objective is to engage with local partners and key stakeholders to increase awareness about human trafficking and secure safe, stable housing for human trafficking survivors. Objective 4 is to develop housing protocols and procedures to address sex and labor trafficking. And finally, Objective 5 is to improve outcomes for victims of human trafficking by providing support services.

There are specific program requirements, which can be found on page 10 of the NOFO. First, applicants must comply with privacy and confidentiality requirements as outlined in the federal code. Second, applicants must ensure that any staff, partner staff, or service providers that are engaging directly with trafficking victims are licensed and have appropriate training and experience. Third, applicants must ensure that the project coordinator or program director and other relevant staff participate in any grantee orientations. Fourth, applicants must offer referrals to support services for trafficking victims upon securing permanent housing. Note: Support services for victims who transition into permanent homes are limited to advocacy, support services, case management, and minimal financial assistance.

Applicants seeking priority consideration should specify in the proposal narrative and in the budget detail form, if applicable, which of the following goal or goals the project is intended to advance and how it will do so. Note: Addressing these priority areas 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.

Award recipients will be required to submit performance measure data in the performance measurement tool, otherwise known as the PMT, and separately submit semiannual performance reports in JustGrants. Applicants selected for an award will receive further guidance on post-award reporting processes. You can visit OJP's

performance measurement page at OJP.gov/performance for more information on performance measurement activities.

The next two slides outline activities that are out of scope for the program and will not be funded. There's a lot of detail on these slides, so I encourage you to read them carefully. In addition, the information is included in the NOFO on page 11. Please ensure to review the guidance carefully as you prepare your application. Additionally, be sure to refer to the budget detail form for further information on allowable and unallowable costs that may inform the development of your program design. You can find this information again on page 11 of the NOFO under the Program Description section.

All awards under this NOFO will be made as grants. If you would like more details, please refer to the "[Administrative, National Policy, and Other Legal Requirements](#)" section of the OJP Grant Application Resource Guide.

It is important to note that there is a 25-percent match requirement under this NOFO. The match requirement is based on the total project costs. Hence, federal funds awarded under the NOFO may not cover more than 75 percent of the total cost of the project being funded. Please refer to page 13 in the NOFO to see how to calculate the required match of your application.

Items provided as part of the match must support the fulfillment of proposed activities, the allowable costs under this funding opportunity, and have documentation of their value. The match requirement can be met with cash and/or "in-kind" contributions. "In-kind" contributions may be in the form of services, supplies, real property such as office space, and/or equipment. Additional information about match can be found in the Application Resource Guide.

I'm now going to hand things over to Aaron who will walk you through the application content. Over to you, Aaron.

Aaron Bryant: Thank you, Kristin. So, we will start by going through the application content. To be considered for funding, your application must include the SF-424, which is submitted in Grants.gov, as well as the proposal narrative and budget detail form, which are submitted in JustGrants.

To start with, the proposal narrative format. So, your application must include proposal narrative that follows all formatting and content requirements as detailed in the NOFO. The narrative should be double-spaced, use 12-point standard font, have no less than 1-inch margins, not exceed 20 numbered pages, and be submitted as an attachment in JustGrants. If the proposal fails to comply with these length-related restrictions, OVC may consider such non-compliance 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. These items will count toward the page limit.

Your proposal narrative must include the four sections listed here. The Description of Need, which will be 15 percent of your score; Project Goals and Objectives, which is 20

percent of your score; the Project Design and Implementation, which is 25 percent of the score; and the Capabilities and Competencies, which is 30 percent of the score. An additional 10 percent will be assessed through your budget and associated documentation. Your application will be evaluated for technical merit based on how your proposed project addresses these criteria.

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 need's impact on the target population and how it relates to the NOFO. With this, you will provide a brief explanation of the need, gap, or issue to be addressed; provide supporting information, data, or evidence to demonstrate the need's existence, size, and impact on the target population. Be sure to cite sources of data.

Additionally, you will need to provide a description of the need. You describe current efforts to address the housing service needs of trafficking survivors in the geographic area you're proposing to serve. At a minimum, applicants must identify the total number of victims they previously served within the targeted geographic area and the types of victims they have served (sex or labor trafficking, for example). Applicants must cite sources of this data. Additionally, you will need to demonstrate existing and sustained victim services rates, caseloads, expenses that align with the requested level of funding, and explain how the proposed project is not duplicative of current efforts to address the housing needs of trafficking survivors in the geographic area.

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. Keep in mind project goals are broad, visionary statements on what the applicant hopes to accomplish, and project objectives are specific outcomes that applicant plans to achieve through the project activities. Additionally, how the applicant's goals and objectives relate to the goals and objectives of the NOFO. See "How Awards Will Contribute to Program Goals and Objectives" section for details. And finally, how the proposed project will enhance the community'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 goals and objectives that you identified in section 2. Make sure that you include activities that you plan to conduct to achieve the proposed goals and objectives; how you will deliver or complete those activities; when the activities will take place and who in the applicant's organization will staff the activities, including key staff; who will participate in and benefit from the activity; what deliverables, reports, and other items will be produced as part of the project; and, if the applicant plans to use subrecipients or project partners to help conduct the project, please name them if they're known or describe how the applicant will identify them. Please describe their role in conducting project activities.

And finally, how housing will be provided, including the type of housing (whether housing is program-owned, program-rented, and/or has landlord/tenant relationship); the anticipated location; the method for determining client eligibility (including

screening, eligibility requirements); and the housing rules and regulations; and the fee schedule, if applicable.

The final section of your Proposal Narrative should detail your capabilities and competencies that you bring to successfully complete your proposed project. In this, you should provide a short description of your capacity to deliver the proposed project and meet the needs of the award. Include collecting and reporting the required performance measure data and managing the administrative and financial aspects of the award, who will be responsible for these tasks, and how will you collect the data. Please refer to the "Program Description: Performance Measure" section for additional details on performance measures for this funding opportunity.

Additionally, you will need to provide a description of projects/activities that your organization has conducted or is currently conducting that demonstrate the applicant's ability to undertake the proposed project activities. For services that are proposed to be subawarded to project partners or provided a match by other organizations, you must submit a corresponding memorandum of understanding, or MOU, or letter of intent, LOI, outlining or to be conducted. If you do not have documented experience serving victims of human trafficking, your application must include a victim services provider as a required partner in an LOI or MOU and should demonstrate that the victim service provider is significantly involved in the project design and development. Please see page 22 in the NOFO for more details about MOU and LOI content.

You'll finally need to provide 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.

The application must include a detailed line-item budget using the JustGrants budget detail form. An attached budget document is not acceptable. The budget detail form collects the individual costs under each category needed to implement your proposed project. Applicants should ensure that the name or description of each cost is clear and provides the detailed calculation--for example, the cost per unit and number of units for the total cost. Applicants should enter additional narrative as needed to fully describe the cost calculations and connection to project goals and objectives, including, if applicable, describing connection to OJP priority goals.

Budget proposals should include the funding needed to implement the proposed activities. In preparing your budget proposals, you 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.

Please note funding restrictions noted on pages 19 and 20 in the NOFO, which include items such as inability to hold beds, inability to provide stipends or incentives to participate in services, and no funds can be used for construction or the purchase of property.

Along with your budget detail form in JustGrants, your application may also require additional attachments. For those applicants with a federally approved indirect cost rate agreement, you should upload it as an attachment in JustGrants, if requesting indirect costs in the submitted budget. Additionally, if you propose a rate for a consultant on your project that is higher than the established OJP maximum rate of \$81.25 an hour or \$650 per day, then you will need to request approval before incurring costs at the higher rate. Please see the DOJ Financial Guide, section 3.6.

If an applicant proposes to hire employees with federal award funds for any award more than \$250,000; use federal funds to pay cash compensation/salary plus cash bonuses to any employee of the recipient at a rate that exceeds 110 percent of the maximum annual salary payable to a member of the federal government senior executive service at an agency with a certified SES performance appraisal system for that year, applicants may request a waiver from this requirement by submitting the appropriate form.

An applicant that is a nonprofit organization may be required to make certain disclosures relating to the processes that are used to determine the compensation of its officers, directors, trustees, and key employees. If applicable, the applicant will upload a description of the process used to determine executive compensation as an attachment in JustGrants. See the Application Resource Guide for more information.

Along with the supplemental budget documentation, your application may require additional attachments. Please see page 22 of the NOFO for details. Some of these attachments may include resumes, Tribal authorizing resolutions, or timelines.

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 do the following: Be from an eligible applicant. Not exceed the award ceiling. Be responsive to the NOFO scope. Include the SF-424 in Grants.gov, the proposal narrative in JustGrants, budget detail form, including budget items, their calculations, and explanations in JustGrants.

And with that, I will pass it back to Kristin to talk about the process for submitting the application.

Kristin Weschler: Thank you, Aaron. We're now going to share a brief overview of the application submission process. Before you can apply for funding, you must register or renew your entity with [SAM.gov](#). 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 please start early. At any point during the year, be sure your status reaches "Active" before you need to submit a funding application. You are to renew your registration in SAM.gov every 12

months. Even if you've applied for a federal grant before, you need to check that your registration is current, and renew it if it is not.

Applicants who do not have an active [SAM.gov](#) status will not be able to complete Step 1 of the application process in Grants.gov. Also, be sure that your organization's points 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 validations and release it to JustGrants. You will complete the rest of the application in [JustGrants](#).

There are two application steps, each with their own deadline, as noted earlier. You must submit the required documents by the Grants.gov deadline of February 24, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. eastern time to be considered. 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 have submitted the forms in Grants.gov, you will submit the rest of your application in JustGrants. The JustGrants deadline is March 3, 2026, by 8:59 p.m. eastern time.

The JustGrants submission should include all items that are required in the NOFO. For technical assistance about submitting your application in any of these platforms, please contact the appropriate help desks listed in the NOFO and at the end of this presentation.

So, what happens after an application is submitted? 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 a notice that your application has been eliminated for further review.

For competitive opportunities, peer reviewers who are subject matter experts assess the technical merits of an application. OVC staff then assess applications based on factors such as geographical diversity, past performance, and whether applications are likely to meet the funding opportunities, goals, and objectives.

We then evaluate the fiscal integrity of the applicant, examine the 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 risks presented by applicants prior to making an award. This pre-award risk assessment takes into account a variety of factors, including an applicants financial capability and past performance.

During the review 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 their award appear in their JustGrants account. If you receive notice of an award, you must take specific steps in the JustGrants system to accept or decline it. The [DOJ Award Acceptance Checklist](#) on the JustGrants Resources 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 fiscal year 2025 funding opportunity may be funded in future fiscal years, including fiscal year 2026, depending on, among other considerations, the merit of the applications and the availability of appropriations.

I will now turn the presentation back to Aaron, who will walk you through some resources to support you in the development of your application.

Aaron Bryant: Thanks, Kristin. We have many resources available 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. The guide includes sections on registering, roles, workspaces, completing forms, and sending in your application.

The JustGrants website has a [collection of resources](#) available for you to use. 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 grants management tasks during the application process.

The [DOJ Application Submission Checklist](#) includes step-by-step instructions on preparing your OVC application. The [Office of Justice Programs 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 grant 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 cases, 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 purposes for which they were awarded. Applicants will want to become familiar with the guide. It compiles a variety of laws, rules, and regulations that affect the financial and administrative management of your award. References to underlying laws and regulations have been provided in the guide as much as possible.

The top 10 topics in the guide as listed here, [include] financial management systems, allowable costs, unallowable costs, several 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, we've given you a brief overview of how to apply for the OVC Fiscal Year 2025 Housing Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking Notice of Funding Opportunity. For further detailed training on application submission, you can attend a live weekly training session, download detailed training slides, or watch a prerecorded web version of the training.

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 is a technical reason they could not submit. So, you will want to ensure you have plenty of time to address any technical issues you may encounter.

JustGrants can be reached by phone or email. 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 very important in the event you need to document that you had a technical issue that prevented you from submitting your application.

The OJP Response Center is available to answer questions about programmatic requirements of the NOFO. They can be reached by phone or email. If you are 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 deadline, 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 with registering or working in SAM.gov or Grants.gov, please contact their help desks directly.

With that, we thank you for your time and attention.

Serena Roche: Thank you, Kristin and Aaron, 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 [as] this process can take several weeks.
- Review program-specific application deadlines and requirements.
- And contact the OJP Response Center for any 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.