



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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TO: Victims Services Grant Program (VSGP) Applicants

FROM: Thomas Okuda Fitzpatrick, Division Director, Division of Programs and Services

DATE: May 13, 2021

SUBJECT: Grant Award Recommendations for VSGP

Last week the Grants Committee of the Criminal Justice Services Board (CJSB) reviewed the Victims Services Grant Program (VSGP) applications and evaluations, and made recommendations for the CJSB to approve at their May 20, 2021, meeting. As a recipient of this memo, your application is one that has been recommended for funding.

The purpose of this memo is to explain how the funding decisions were made in light of the decreases in VOCA funds and the incredible level of interest for the VSGP. This year we had 109 applicants requesting \$75.95 million in federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds for the next two-year grant cycle. Ultimately, only \$51.5 million over the two-year period is available to award, of which \$18.21 million are for competitive grants. In the competitive categories, we received \$21.15 million in grant requests that could not be funded.

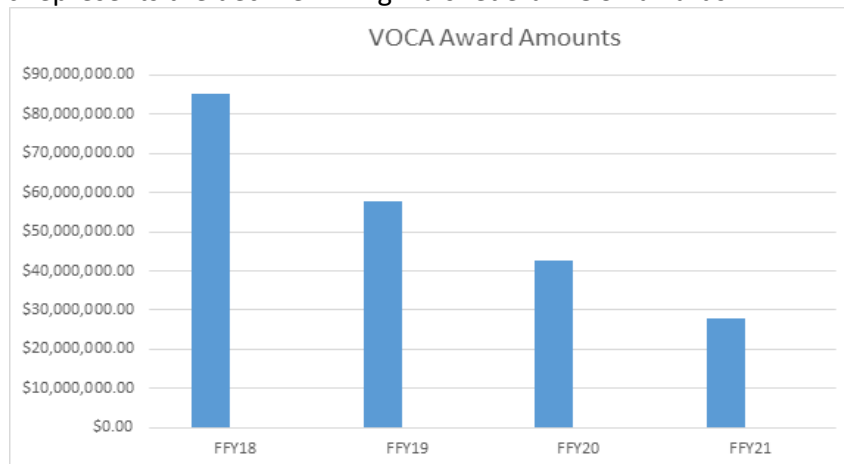
As described in the [VSGP Grant Guidelines](#), the grant program includes both a competitive component and a non-competitive component for sexual assault and domestic violence core services. The priority areas for VOCA funding are, both at the federal level and at DCJS, services for victims of child abuse, services for traditionally underserved populations, services for victims of domestic violence, and services for victims of sexual assault. These priority areas are reflected in both the VSGP Grant Guidelines and in the award recommendations.

All applications detailed incredible, worthwhile programs that would provide valuable services to victims of crime across the Commonwealth. As such, the decision was made to fund as many programs as possible with reduced budget amounts, rather than funding fewer programs with full budgets. Of the 109 applicants, 100 are recommended to receive grant awards. As previously mentioned, as a recipient of this memo, your application is one of the 100 that is recommended for funding; however, almost all competitive applicants are recommended to receive awards less than they requested.

All applications and budgets were highly scrutinized to ensure awards are based on direct services to victims of crime, varied services are available across the Commonwealth, and all awarded budget items are allocable, allowable, justified, necessary, and reasonable. Requests to fund new positions were not recommended for currently-funded programs. Finally, a percent deduction was applied to two of the funding categories. If percent deductions had not been applied, DCJS would only have been able to support 12 competitive applicants. By contrast, using this approach enabled us to fund 75 competitive applications/projects that will serve numerous victims across the Commonwealth.

In addition to the large number of applications, reduced levels of federal VOCA funds further constrained the process. Federal VOCA funds have been declining significantly since the Federal Fiscal Year 2018 (FFY18) award of \$85.36 million. DCJS was notified in January that the FFY21 award will likely be about \$27 million dollars—a decrease of 67% since the FFY18 award. To promote sustainability for other VOCA-funded services in outlying years, the total funds available this cycle are \$2 million less than anticipated in the VSGP Grant Guidelines.

The below graphic represents the decline in Virginia’s federal VOCA awards.



The following steps were taken in the review of each application:

Scoring and Ranking of Applications

Teams of internal and external reviewers evaluated and scored each application for the competitive grant categories. Applications were then ranked by score. The maximum possible score was 130 (including bonus points). Applicants with a score of 75 points or below were not recommended for funding. In addition, some applicants scored over 75, but were not recommended for funding due to concerns about duplication of services or requested expenses. In total, 9 of the 109 applicants were recommended not to be funded.

Budget Review and Reductions

Each application was also reviewed separately by the two VSGP Grant Coordinators. This review focused on VOCA eligibility, priority areas, and submitted budgets. The following types of expenses in competitive applications were removed/deducted from the total budget:

- Unallowable expenses per the federal [VOCA Victim Assistance Program Rule](#)
- Expenses that did not meet the criteria as outlined in the VSGP Grant Guidelines or that did not include a basis of computation

- In most cases, new positions and related expenses were not approved because priority was given to maintaining current positions and services
- Requests for "Emergency Victim Assistance" funds, "Flexible Spending," or similar line items were not approved, in order to fund services that could be anticipated and accounted for at the time of the grant application

Because of this budget review, we are confident that grant-supported expenses in funded projects are justified, necessary, and reasonable, will support the proposed project goals, and most importantly, will directly benefit victims of crime.

Even after these steps, the remaining budgets exceeded available VOCA funds by \$11 million. In order to fund as many programs and direct services as possible, percent deductions were applied to two of the funding categories that exceeded the anticipated amounts available as outlined in the VSGP Grant Guidelines. Using this approach provides funding for 75 competitive applicants to serve victims throughout the state. The percent deductions were applied as follows:

- Applicants who received bonus points for projects that have the sole purpose of serving child victims and/or are housed in a child-focused agency did not receive a deduction. This is because the amount of funds recommended for this category did not exceed the amount allocated.
- Applicants who received bonus points for projects that have the sole purpose of serving traditionally underserved populations and/or are housed in a culturally specific agency received a 10% reduction.
- All other competitive applicants received a 60% reduction. However, DCJS recognizes that a base level of funding is necessary to carry out a project. As a result, in cases where the 60% decrease would have reduced a total recommended budget below \$70,000 for the two-year period, the recommended award amount stayed at \$70,000, unless the applicant requested less.

Again, this percentage decrease is the result of requests far exceeding available funds and a commitment to funding as many programs as possible, even at lower amounts.

Award Notifications

Following the May 20, 2021 CJSB meeting, you will be notified of your specific award amount. All applicants will receive an email from the VSGP Grant Coordinators that will contain application scoring forms and additional details specific to your application. The DCJS Grants Management team will also send award packages to all applicants who are awarded VSGP funding.

It is our intent that this memo and the documents emailed on May 20th will help applicants understand how funding decisions were made for this grant process. In accordance with DCJS's policy on reviewing competitive grant applications, the CJSB funding decisions are final and may not be appealed.

If you have any questions, please contact Kristina Vadas, Victims Services Manager, at kristina.vadas@dcjs.virginia.gov or 804-786-7802. Thank you very much for all the work you do in serving others, including the difficult work of seeking grant funding.