



VOCA LISTENING SESSION: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Can we have a collaborative application process like OVW (e.g., the Grant to Encourage Arrest and Enforcement of Protective Orders Program)?

We are currently looking at the best way to streamline the grant application process including modeling grant solicitations similar to OVW.

What about the possibility of funding a team?

Based on information gleaned from the Listening Sessions, opportunities for programs to apply for “team” or “regional” projects may be an option. However, please keep in mind that the project can benefit a specific region or multiple organizations but one eligible agency or organization must agree to serve as the administering grant recipient agency.

Would DCJS consider funding regional projects (collaboration on needs)? Can funds be utilized for personnel to serve a region vs. a locality?

Yes, if serving a region, rather than a single locality, is the most cost effective and reasonable approach, DCJS could fund regional projects.

Can we have a new data collection system to replace CIMS?

DCJS is currently looking at ways to enhance technology which includes CIMS to support federal and state reporting requirements. Designing, building, testing and replacing a new and improved system is a priority, but will take time and involvement from our CIMS users.

Can VOCA funding support forensic interviews of children?

These costs are allowable, under certain circumstances. The federal Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) has previously interpreted the current VOCA guidelines to allow for victim assistance funding to be used for forensic interviews for children and individuals with disabilities. See Final VOCA Victim Assistance Program Guidelines, Sections IV.E.1(a) and (b).

Several relevant issues from the current VOCA guidelines are summarized below to illustrate guidance related to the allowability of forensic interviewing.

In addition to victim services organizations, whose sole purpose is to serve crime victims, there are many other public and nonprofit organizations that have components which offer services to crime victims. These organizations are eligible to receive VOCA funds, if the funds are used to expand or enhance the delivery of crime victims’ services. (current guidelines p. 27)

For example, VOCA funds may be used to provide crime victim services that exceed a law enforcement official’s normal duties. Regular law enforcement duties such as crime scene intervention, questioning of victims and witnesses, investigation of the crime, and follow-up activities may not be paid for with VOCA funds. (Current guidelines p. 27)

Similarly, hospitals and emergency medical facilities can receive VOCA funds only if they offer crisis counseling, support groups, and/or other types of victim services. In addition, VOCA funds can support the costs of performing forensic examinations on sexual assault victims only if (1) the examination meets the standards established by the state, local prosecutor’s office, or statewide sexual assault coalition; and (2) appropriate crisis counseling and/or other types of victim services are offered to the victim in conjunction with the examination (Current guidelines p. 27) and only to the extent that other funding sources (such as state compensation or private insurance or public benefits) are unavailable or insufficient (current guidelines p. 29). Additionally, VOCA victim assistance grant funds cannot

support medical costs resulting from a victimization, except for forensic medical examinations for sexual assault victims (current guidelines p.34).

Generally, VOCA funds should not be used to support contract services. However, under current VOCA guidelines (p.32), when essential, states can allow subrecipients to use a portion of VOCA grants to contract for specialized services. Examples of these services include emergency psychological or psychiatric services.

Thus, under current guidelines, within the restrictions summarized above and given appropriate program design, forensic interviewing costs could be supported with VOCA funds. Additionally, the proposed VOCA regulations specifically address forensic interviewing costs and the circumstances under which such costs are allowable.

Is it the intent of DCJS to roll out all of the money within the first year?

No, it is likely that the majority of the first VOCA allocation will be awarded and expanded during FY17, with the remainder awarded in FY18 (July 1, 2016 – June, 30 2018).

Has DCJS decided how we are going to proceed with the process?

Grant guidelines and/or Grant Guidance Documents will be posted in March 2016. Applications will be due approximately 30-45 days after the posting and will be subject to a grant review process and final approval by the Criminal Justice Services Board.

What is the overall increase expected in the funding plan?

For FY17 and beyond, in broad terms our plans are to:

- Develop funding formulas to allocate the majority of funds to programs serving crime victims in priority categories, as required by the VOCA statute and guidelines, and;
- Develop grant application guidelines to support new initiatives addressing the needs of underserved populations, as identified through the survey, Listening Sessions, and subsequent research.

Specifically, formulas are being developed to drive the allocation of funding for the following program types traditionally supported with VOCA funds:

- Victim/Witness Programs
- Domestic Violence Programs
- Sexual Assault Programs
- CASA Programs

What is the current percentage for VOCA match funds?

The current VOCA guidelines indicate that matching contributions of 20% (cash or in-kind; 25% for new projects) of the total cost of each VOCA project (VOCA grant plus match) are required for each established VOCA-funded project. All funds designated as match are restricted to the same uses as the VOCA victim assistance funds and must be expended within the grant period. (Current guidelines p. 23)

In-kind match may include donations of expendable equipment, office supplies, workshop or classroom materials, work space, or the monetary value of time contributed by professionals and technical personnel and other skilled and unskilled labor, if the services they provide are an integral and necessary part of a funded project.

Historically, DCJS has utilized state General Funds and Special Funds appropriated to support Victim/Witness Programs and Sexual Assault Grant Programs to provide the required match for these programs. Other VOCA funded projects document allocation of required cash or in-kind matching funds, within their grant applications.

Are the current percentages for VOCA funds going to be used?

Given adequate resources, DCJS will continue to provide matching funds for Victim/Witness and Sexual Assault Grant Programs. DCJS will also offer technical assistance to grantees in identifying and documenting in-kind and non-federal cash matching funds. Additionally, the federal Office for Victims of Crime is authorized to waive the match requirement ,if extraordinary need is documented by State VOCA administrator (DCJS).

Can grant funds replace state or local funds?

Federal funds must be used to supplement existing State and local funds for program activities and must not supplant those funds that have been appropriated for the same purpose.

- Supplanting will be reviewed during the application process, post-award monitoring, and audit.
- Grantees must supply documentation demonstrating the current level of non-federal resources supporting the project and demonstrating that any reduction in non-Federal resources occurred for reasons other than the receipt or expected receipt of Federal funds.
- A written re-certification stating that federal funds will not be used to supplant state or local funds, will also be required.

Is there any clarification on what constitutes a “new” initiative?

Generally, new initiatives would include projects which currently do not receive VOCA funding or any other DCJS victim assistance grant funding.

Can we have flexible funding such that DCJS will hold grantees to outcomes vs. specific line items?

Performance requirements will vary according to the type of project funded. Line-item budgets and program output and outcome data, consistent with OVC's Performance Management Tool and other requirements will be required.

Can some of the funding go toward trauma-informed care and training?

Yes, this is an allowable cost under VOCA funding.

Will there be any money for prevention, specifically primary prevention?

Current VOCA guidelines prohibit support of activities exclusively related to crime prevention. VOCA funds may be used to support presentations that are made in schools, community centers, or other public forums, and that are designed to identify crime victims and provide or refer them to needed services. Specifically, activities and costs related to such programs including presentation materials, brochures, and newspaper notices can be supported by VOCA funds.

Is there a way to consolidate grant reporting? Would DCJS consider keeping grant requirements simple and streamline reporting?

DCJS has streamlined the grant requirements and reporting elements by, in general requesting only the information which is required by the Office for Victims of Crime at the U.S Department of Justice. DCJS will continue to work with grantees and the federal Office for Victims of Crime to ensure that reporting requirements as as liited as possible while providing necessary information.

Would DCJS consider consolidating grant guidelines and application processes to include multiple purpose areas or programs (e.g. umbrella organization that operates a CAC, CASA, DV shelter and clinical services)?

Individual application guidelines are likely to be developed for the following program types traditionally supported with VOCA funds:

- Victim/Witness Programs
- Domestic Violence Programs
- Sexual Assault Programs
- CASA Programs

However, DCJS will look for opportunities to consolidate and streamline application guidance and application processes, wherever possible.

Can VOCA funds be considered for child abuse prevention programs such as evidence-based home visiting programs?

According to the current VOCA guidelines, the primary purpose of these grants is to support the provision of direct services to victims of crime. Direct services are defined as those efforts that (1) respond to the emotional and physical needs of crime victims; (2) assist primary and secondary victims of crime to stabilize their lives after a victimization; (3) assist victims to understand and participate in the criminal justice system; and (4) provide victims of crime with a measure of safety and security after a victimization. Current VOCA guidelines also prohibit support of activities exclusively related to crime prevention.

Thus, prevention focus programs are less likely to be eligible VOCA subrecipients, while projects focused on direct service delivery are more likely to be eligible.

Would DCJS consider funding to create electronic case filing for grants administration?

Yes. Advanced technologies are allowable costs under VOCA. For example, computers and software and related technologies may increase a subrecipient's ability to reach and serve crime victims.

However, in requesting funding for technology enhancement, subrecipients must describe how the computer equipment, software, or related technology will enhance services to crime victims; how it will be integrated into and/or enhance the subrecipient's current system; the cost of installation; the cost of training staff to use the technology; the ongoing operational costs and how these additional costs will be supported. (Final Program Guidelines: Victims of Crime Act Victim Assistance Grant Program, page 31-32). VOCA funds cannot support the entire cost of an item that is not used exclusively for victim-related activities. However, VOCA funds can support a prorated share of such an item. In addition, subrecipients cannot use VOCA funds to purchase equipment for another organization or individual to perform a victim-related service.

Would VOCA funds cover restorative justice programs that include a victim component such as restorative circles/conferences for juveniles?

Restorative justice opportunities, where crime victims meet with perpetrators, are allowable, if such meetings are requested "or voluntarily agreed to" by the victim and have possible beneficial or therapeutic value to crime victims. Funding priorities have not been established but in accordance with current VOCA guidelines, DCJS would closely review the criteria for conducting these meetings, prior to approving any funding. Considerations would include: (1) the safety and security of the victim; (2) the benefit or therapeutic value to the victim; (3) the procedures for ensuring that participation of the victim and offender are voluntary and that everyone understands the nature of the meeting, (4) the provision of appropriate support and accompaniment for the victim, (5) appropriate "debriefing" opportunities for the victim after the meeting or panel, (6) the credentials of the facilitators, and (7) the opportunity for a crime victim to withdraw from the process at any time. VOCA assistance funds cannot be used for victim-offender meetings which serve to replace criminal justice proceedings (Final Program Guidelines: Victims of Crime Act Victim Assistance Grant Program, pages 6 and 30).

Can VOCA funds be used to cover administrative staff costs for all victims' services programs (e.g. supervising volunteers, quality assurance monitoring, data entry etc.)?

VOCA funds can support supervision of direct service providers when such supervision is necessary and essential to providing direct services to crime victims. For example, using VOCA funds to support a coordinator of volunteers or interns may be a cost-effective way of serving more crime victims. See Final VOCA Victim Assistance Program Guidelines, Section IV.E.2.i.

VOCA funds may support administrative time to complete VOCA-required time and attendance sheets and programmatic documentation, reports, and statistics; administrative time to maintain crime victims' records; and the prorated share of audit costs.

However VOCA funds cannot support salaries, fees, and reimbursable expenses associated with administrators, board members, executive directors, consultants, coordinators, and other individuals, unless these expenses are incurred while providing direct services to crime victims.

Additionally, VOCA funds cannot be used for management and administrative training for executive directors, board members, and other individuals that do not provide direct services.

Can VOCA funds be used for coordinating and sustaining child abuse multidisciplinary teams?

VOCA funds are intended to primarily support delivery of direct services to crime victims. With this project focus, VOCA funds could support public child and adult protective services agencies. See Final Program Victim Assistance Guidelines, Section IV.C.5. For example, VOCA funds may also pay a portion of the salary for Child/Adult Protective Service Workers who are providing direct services to child victims. VOCA funds can also support a portion of the salary for Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) Coordinators who are providing direct services to victims of sexual assault. See generally Final VOCA Victim Assistance Program Guidelines, Section IV.E.1.g

Current VOCA eligibility requirements include promoting community efforts to aid crime victims. Coordination may include serving on multi-disciplinary teams. However, coordination efforts qualify an organization to receive VOCA victim assistance funds, but are not, under current guidelines, activities that can be supported with VOCA funds. (Final Program Guidelines: Victims of Crime Act Victim Assistance Grant Program, page 24).

Will VOCA work with incarcerated victims?

Working with incarcerated victims is currently considered an unallowable cost. The proposed VOCA regulations would allow states to support services to incarcerated victims (e.g., victims of sexual assault in prison) in some circumstances.

Will the Listening Session PowerPoint be made available?

Yes. The PowerPoint will be posted on the agency website..

Is OVC prepared for the increase of match waiver requests?

Unknown.

Is OVC trying to get grant period extended to 5 years?

There are efforts by several groups to increase the grant period. It has not been determined if this is a request from OVC.