



## Bureau of Justice Assistance Grant Funding 101

This guide was developed by the Health and Human Services Commission's Office of Forensic Coordination to support Texas communities applying for discretionary criminal justice and behavioral health grant programs administered by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). It was adapted from the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Grants 101 and Grant Application Resource Guide, as well as public examples of previously successful applications. When applying for a grant, always reference the full requirements of the opportunity as components may change over time.

### POTENTIAL GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Based on past funding opportunities, relevant grant programs that may be available in 2024 include the [Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program \(COSSUP\)](#), [Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program \(JMHCPC\)](#), and [Connect and Protect: Law Enforcement Behavioral Health Response Program](#). Other grant programs may be available, and this guide can also support you in developing applications for those. It's recommended to subscribe to the [BJA email listserv](#) to stay informed of grant funding opportunities.

### KEY INSIGHTS

- ✓ **Start early!** To apply, you must have a valid registration in multiple systems. Registration and renewal can take up to 10 business days to complete. Use the [U.S. Department of Justice \(DOJ\) Application Submission Checklist](#) to register.
- ✓ **Follow the application exactly and make sure you respond to every element specified in the solicitation.** Successful grant applications follow the solicitation instructions precisely.
- ✓ **Attend the Funding Webinar for the grant program you would like to apply for.** Ask questions!
- ✓ **Watch the BJA Grant Application Education Series** available under "Previously Held Webinars" on the [BJA Funding Webinar page](#).
- ✓ **Use the OJP Grants 101 and Grant Application Resources.** Resources to support writing your BJA application are on the following OJP pages:
  - [Overview of OJP Grants and Funding](#)
  - [BJA PowerPoint: The Federal Funding Process: The First Steps to Applying, How to Prepare Now, & Other Considerations \(PDF\)](#)

## ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROPOSAL

Hundreds of proposals are submitted each year in response to BJA grant opportunities. Most proposals are not successful due to the number of people competing for the same funding.

To be successful, your proposal must:

- Inform the grant reviewer of your plans through a comprehensive project proposal that responds to each element in the solicitation.
- Persuade the grant reviewer with compelling data and a strong narrative on how the program is needed in your community, and that your organization has the capabilities and competencies to implement the project.

**Grant reviewers often read several grant proposals at once, so successful proposals need to be clear, use data to make an argument for the need (with citations included), and respond to each element of the project narrative.**

Sell the reviewers on the following:

- The need or problem your program will is significant and worthy of funding.
- The project is well planned to ensure a successful implementation.
- Your community or program is capable of successfully managing the funds and completing the proposed project on schedule while meeting your goals and objectives.

Respond to reviewers' needs and expectations by:

- Including details that sufficiently clarify your plans for the reviewers who may be unfamiliar with them.
- Ensuring the proposed project aligns with the solicitation's purpose and goals.

Ensuring the proposal is well written and important information is easily accessible. **Reviewers who have trouble finding or understanding important information will not be convinced that the proposed project deserves funding.**



**TIP: Read the solicitation multiple times**

Begin by reading through the entire solicitation, and then read it again – particularly the Proposal Narrative section. Do not skim the solicitation. Make sure you understand the scope of the grant program and what types of projects are appropriate, the solicitation's specific

requirements, costs that may be prohibited, the performance data that you will need to report, and all tasks that will be required if an award is made.



**TIP: Set up your sections, and your files, in a logical manner.**

- Each solicitation contains specific sections for the Proposal Narrative: Description of the Issues; Project Design and Implementation; Capabilities and Competencies; and Plans for Collecting Data/Performance Measures. For clarity, use these sections as the outline of your Proposal Narrative.
- Use appropriately descriptive file names (e.g., "Proposal Narrative," "Budget and Budget Narrative," "Timelines," "Memoranda of Understanding," "Résumé") for all required attachments.
- Limit the number of attachments. For example, if résumés or letters of support are required, include them in a single file.
- Save and submit files in .doc, .xls or .pdf formats.
- If the solicitation includes multiple categories for which applicants can apply, make sure you submit your application under the appropriate category. All applications will be reviewed by the criteria required for the specific category.
- Make sure your grant proposal includes all requested documentation. All solicitations contain a core set of required documents, but they also may request additional documentation such as a map of the program area. Look in the "Other Attachments" section to be sure you have included all the documents required for the solicitation.



**TIP: Be sure that all items in your budget are allowable and reasonable and that all calculations are provided and correct.**

- The budget should consist of two components: a [budget detail worksheet](#) and a budget narrative. Items to be billed to the grant and the methods used to determine those costs are listed in the budget detail worksheet, while brief descriptions supporting those costs are considered in the budget narrative.
- Like the program abstract and narrative, the solicitation will identify any items that your budget proposal must include. For example, you may be asked to set aside funding for travel to OJP-sponsored conferences or trainings related to the grant. Include those costs in the budget submitted with the application.

- Each budget detail worksheet and budget narrative should include the following eight categories: Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, Equipment, Supplies, Construction (typically not an allowable cost), Consultants/Contracts, Other Costs and Indirect Costs.
- Clearly identify which budget items are matching funds, if required.



**TIP: Before submitting the application, ask a colleague to review it for accuracy, tone and clarity, and check for spelling and grammar.**

- Keep sentences short and avoid complex sentences. The grant reviewer will be reading several applications; make it easy for them to read yours and find the required information in the Proposal Narrative.
- Use familiar words.
- Tie into the purpose, goals and objectives of the solicitation.
- Do not overly rely on quotes from other sources to tell your story. Direct quotations from other sources should not make up the majority of your project narrative.
- Do not merely reproduce or paraphrase the language of the solicitation.



**TIP: Avoid common mistakes.**

- Correct sloppy writing. Ask a strong writer to critique your application.
- Follow directions. Don't ignore basic minimum requirements or list inappropriate budget expenditures.
- Attach all required documents. Make sure you aren't missing elements in the narrative or documents that are not signed or dated.
- Avoid poor planning. Give yourself sufficient time for the online application system, as you may deal with unfamiliar system requirements, problems with collaboration or missing information from partners.
- Check for budget deficiencies. Avoid padding the budget and listing excessive equipment, and don't include unjustified travel, high consultant costs or supplanting.
- Refer to the right solicitation. Make sure the proper solicitation and funding agency is noted. Some applicants apply for funding from multiple agencies and may use variations of the same text.

- Always include full citations for information.
- Your project narrative should use data to paint a picture of your community, describe the challenge you are attempting to solve with the project, and demonstrate your ability to use data to drive your strategy and program design.



**TIP: Use data to make a compelling case for your proposal.**

## HOW TO WRITE THE PROPOSAL ABSTRACT



**TIP: Be sure to read the proposal abstract section of the solicitation carefully.**

The Proposal Abstract should be written in **400 words or less** using plain language and avoiding acronyms.

Proposals should include the:

- Purpose of the proposed project.
- Project activities to be performed.
- Expected outcomes, deliverables or milestones of the proposed project.
- Service area.
- Intended beneficiary or beneficiaries of the proposed project.
- Subrecipient activities. (If known, list entities and project activities.)

The abstract should be in paragraph form without bullets or tables, written in third person and exclude personally identifiable information. Abstracts will be made publicly available on the OJP and USASpending.gov websites if the project is awarded.



**EXAMPLE: Proposal Abstract.**

### **Example Proposal Abstract Template from the Bureau of Justice Assistance:**

The [insert entity name] proposes to implement the [insert project name]. The purpose is to \_\_\_\_\_ in the [insert service area]. Project activities include \_\_\_\_\_. Expected outcomes include: \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ are the intended beneficiaries of the project. Subrecipient activities include \_\_\_\_\_.

*The ABC County proposes to implement the ABC County Second Chance Community-Based Adult Reentry Program. The purpose is to develop a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, trauma-informed, and best practices community-based reentry program for individuals incarcerated in ABC County jail. Project activities include establishing a Reentry Advisory Board; implementing evidence-based risk and need screening and assessments tools; developing and implementing a Multi-Disciplinary Reentry Collaborative Case Management and Coordination Team and designating community-based, peer-run and faith-based organizations to provide post-release care coordination.*

*Expected outcomes include the development of a multi-disciplinary team to address the reentry needs of individuals exiting the ABC County jail; provision of evidence-based services; reduction in recidivism in ABC County; and regular program assessments. Subrecipient activities include vocational skills training, job preparation, career exploration and planning, and skill-building services, including apprenticeships and occupational training.*

## HOW TO WRITE THE PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

**Getting the proposal narrative right is key to success!** The proposal narrative should describe the detailed strategy, activities, resources and implementation of the project. It consists of the following sections:

- Description of the Issue (or Statement of the Problem).
- Project Design and Implementation.
- Capabilities and Competencies.
- Plan for Collecting the Data Required for Performance Measures.

Follow the specific instructions and requirements for each section. Your project narrative should use the sections as an outline and respond to every instruction under each section in the solicitation.



### EXAMPLE: Sub headers to organize responses.

Applicant Agency



*Pleasantville Police Department, located in Pleasantville, Vermont, is the applicant agency for this funding opportunity.*

State, Region and Communities Included in the Proposed Program



*Pleasantville, Vermont, is a fictional community in the northeast part of the state.*

*Pleasantville sits in the county seat of Joyville County, the second most populous county in Vermont.*

The following example of Proposal Narrative requirements came from page 17 of this past fiscal year 2023 [Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program Proposal Narrative](#).



### EXAMPLE: Past JMHCP Proposal Narrative Instructions.

*The Proposal Narrative should be submitted as an attachment in JustGrants. The attached document should be double-spaced, using a standard 12-point font; have no less than 1-*

*inch margins; and should not exceed 15 numbered pages. Pages should be numbered and submitted as an attachment. If the Proposal Narrative fails to comply with these length restrictions, BJA may consider such noncompliance in its peer review and final award decision.*

***The Proposal Narrative must include the following sections:***

***a. Description of the Issue***

- 1** *Identify or introduce the issue to be addressed by the grant and why this program or these proposed activities are necessary (significance and value).*
- 2** *Describe and demonstrate the nature and scope of the problem to be addressed using data and research as support.*
- 3** *Describe successful efforts to date to address the needs identified.*
- 4** *Describe the need for assistance and resources to address the problem.*
- 5** *Briefly introduce how the applicant proposes to address the problem.*

 **TIP: Descriptions may contain multiple “hidden” questions. For example, there are five distinct questions above. This applies to all sections of the proposal narrative. Ensure all questions or tasks are addressed, answered or responded to.**

***b. Project Design and Implementation***

- 1** *Describe the strategy to address the needs identified in the Description of the Issue.*
- 2** *List the activities and* **3** *describe how they relate to the stated objectives.*
- 4** *Describe the specific actions and* **5** *how they will fulfill the program’s objectives and reach the program’s goal or goals.*

**6** Provide a detailed description of the method or methods to be used to carry out each activity.

**7** Provide a timetable or project plan indicating roughly when the activities or program milestones are to be accomplished and **8** who is responsible.

**9** Address whether any of the program-specific priority areas have been met.

**10** Explain the applicant's inability to fund the collaboration program adequately without federal assistance.

**11** Specify how the federal support will be used to supplement and not supplant state, local, American Indian tribe or other tribal organization sources of funding that would otherwise be available, including billing for services already covered under programs such as Medicaid, Medicare and the State Children's Insurance Program.

**(Optional) 12** If the applicant is seeking priority consideration for Priority 1(A), it should address in this section how the proposed project or projects will promote racial equity and the removal of barriers to access and opportunity for communities that have been historically underserved, marginalized and adversely affected by inequality, and identify how the project design and implementation will specifically incorporate the input or participation of these communities.

### ***c. Capabilities and Competencies***

**1** Describe the capabilities and competencies of the applicant to manage the award.

**2** Provide a detailed description of the capacity of the partners and **3** the key personnel to deliver the required services and perform the key tasks described under Project Design and Implementation.

**TASK 1** Include a letter of support from the joint applicants' agency executives demonstrating their commitment to the project.

**TASK 2** Demonstration of the partners' commitment will contribute to scoring under this criterion.

**4** Describe how the proposed management structure and staffing of the program will facilitate the delivery of the required services. The management and organizational

structure described should match the staffing needs necessary to accomplish the tasks outlined in the timeline or plan. Information regarding the personnel assigned to these tasks and whether their résumés and role descriptions are included will contribute to the assignment of points relative to this criterion.



**TIP: If the process is complex, you can include a simple workflow.**

***d. Plan for Collecting the Data Required for this Solicitation's Performance Measures***

*Example guidance to applicant – 1 Describe the process for measuring project performance. 2 Identify who will collect the data; 3 who is responsible for performance measurements; and 4 how the information will be used to guide and evaluate the project's impact. 5 Describe the process to accurately report data.*

## HOW TO WRITE THE BUDGET NARRATIVE AND WORKSHEET

The budget documents (detailed Budget Worksheet and Budget Narrative) can be submitted two ways: (1) using the web-based form on JustGrants (Under the “Budgets and Associated Documents” section) or (2) uploading as a separate attachment.

New applicants are required to submit using the web-based form. Examples of budget documents are located [here](#). [This video](#) shows the process of submitting a budget detail form on JustGrants.

Below is an abbreviated version of the budget narrative from the “Sample Materials” section on the [OJP Grants 101 page](#).



### EXAMPLE: Sample Budget Narrative

- A. **Personnel:** *As the XXX Police Department is in a rural area and has inadequate personnel to implant/create an Investigations Unit to improve and enhance rural area law enforcement investigative capabilities and investigation, we will need to **hire two additional sworn police officers**. The monetary amount listed in the budget for this program is the salaried rate for a starting sworn police officer at the XXX Police Department. These personnel are required to successfully implement this grant program.*
- B. **Fringe Benefits:** *For the **two new sworn police officers**: each officer’s benefits are calculated at **54.89% salaried benefits for 24 months**, the length of the grant funding. 54.89% was determined by: SOC/FICA 1.45%, Workers’ Comp. 7.14%, Health Insurance 28.80%, and Retirement 17.50%.*
- C. **Travel:** *The following trainings and meetings are a part of this grant program and essential to its success.*

*Two sworn staff to attend the **U.S. Department of Justice-sponsored grant meeting** to be held in **Washington, D.C.** (Estimated costs are documented in the budget portion of this grant.)*

*Two sworn staff to attend the **U.S. Department of Justice-sponsored grant meeting** to be held in California **U.S. Congressional District 01**. (Estimated costs are documented in the budget portion of this grant.)*

Two newly assigned Detectives/Investigators, plus our current Detective/Investigator, will provide us with three Detectives/Investigators forming the Investigations Unit. Training is essential to the success of this unit and program. These three Detectives/Investigators will each be sent to two 80-hour California Police Officers and Standards Training (P.O.S.T.) **investigative courses** during the course of this grant/program. Specific investigative courses to be determined based on the selection of the Detectives/Investigators and training they have already received and specialized training determined necessary for the success of this program. (Estimated costs are documented in the budget portion of this grant.)

- D. **Equipment:** The following equipment is essential for the Detectives/Investigators to successfully accomplish the goals and objectives of this grant/program.

The XXX Police Department is located in the rural community of XXX in XXX County in northern California. Due to this, the criminals the officers encounter, conduct investigations on, and arrest are familiar with the sworn officers and the department vehicles. In order for the Detectives/Investigators in the Investigations Unit to successfully conduct proactive investigations, they need an unmarked police vehicle. With funds received from this grant, the XXX Police Department will purchase an unmarked police vehicle for the Investigations Unit to allow the goals and objectives of this grant/program to be accomplished. (Estimated cost is documented in the budget portion of this grant.)

The XXX Police Department Investigations Unit will be very limited in its surveillance capability based on the rural wooded environment in which the city is located. In past and current attempts to conduct surveillance operations on criminal suspects during daytime and nighttime hours, XXX Police Department officers have been unsuccessful during the majority of these operations due to our rural environment and the size of the community. Additionally, during nighttime hours on crimes-in-progress calls, officers have been unsuccessful in locating and apprehending the suspects the majority of the time. This is due to the lack of technology and resources available to the XXX Police Department officers. With funds received from this grant, the XXX Police Department will purchase a **FLIR FlashSight** device (a handheld thermal imaging device made specifically for law enforcement) to allow the goals and objectives of this grant/program to be accomplished. (Cost determined by phone quote from FLIR and is documented in the budget portion of this grant.)

- E. **Supplies:** *The following supplies are essential for the Detectives/Investigators to successfully accomplish the goals and objectives of this grant/program.*

*As previously stated, the city of XXX is in a rural, wooded area in XXX County in northern California, which is very well known for illegal marijuana growing operations. The suspects who engage in these activities often travel to and from the illegal marijuana growing operations. To locate, investigate, and successfully prosecute these suspects, Detectives/Investigators need to be able to locate the illegal marijuana growing operations. A safe way to do this is with technology that the department does not yet possess. That technology is covert GPS tracking devices that can be attached to suspect vehicles. Covert GPS tracking devices can be used with data loggers and live tracking devices. Detectives/Investigators need these devices to conduct other narcotics-related investigations, to use with bait property operations, and to track other suspects engaged in criminal activity, identifying locations they frequent and their associates. With funds received from this grant, the XXX Police Department will purchase **two covert GPS data loggers, one live track covert GPS device with magnetic case, activation, and a two-year tracking subscription**. These devices will allow the goals and objectives of this grant/program to be accomplished. (Costs determined from listed prices on the company's Web site and are documented in the budget portion of this grant.)*

- F. **Construction:** *This section is not applicable.*
- G. **Consultants/Contracts:** *This section is not applicable.*
- H. **Other Costs:** *The tuition fees are for the trainings detailed under the "Travel" portion of this grant proposal, and they are an essential part to its success. (Estimated costs are documented in the budget portion of this grant.)*
- I. **Indirect Costs:** *This section is not applicable.*