



# Office of the Governor, Public Safety Office Criminal Justice Division Funding Announcement: ***General Victim Assistance Grant Program, FY2024***

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this program is to provide services and assistance directly to victims of crime to speed their recovery and aid them through the criminal justice process.

Services may include the following:

- Responding to the emotional and physical needs of crime victims;
- Assisting victims in stabilizing their lives after a victimization;
- Assisting victims to understand and participate in the criminal justice system; and
- Providing victims with safety and security.

Projects seeking to provide specialized programs for victims of commercial sexual exploitation or sex trafficking under the age of 25 must apply under either the Residential and Community-Based Services for Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation or the CSEY Advocacy Program Request for Application. Projects seeking to provide general victim services to broad categories of victim populations that may include victims of commercial sexual exploitation or trafficking should apply under this General Victims Services Request for Application.

Projects seeking to prevent, investigate or prosecute commercial sexual exploitation should refer to the funding announcement designed for those projects.

Agencies applying for funds to support a CASA or Children's Advocacy Center program must apply through either Texas CASA, Inc. or Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas.

## **Available Funding**

Federal funding is authorized for these projects under the following sources:

- Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA) as amended and codified in 34 U.S.C. §20103. VOCA funds are made available through a Congressional appropriation to the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime. All awards are subject to the availability of appropriated federal funds and any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law.
- Section 9901 of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Pub. L. No. 117-2, which amends Title VI of the Social Security Act by adding sections 602 to establish the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund.

## Eligible Organizations

Applications may be submitted by state agencies, public and private non-profit institutions of higher education, independent school districts, Native American tribes, councils of governments, non-profit corporations (including hospitals and faith-based organizations) and units of local government, which are defined as a non-statewide governmental body with the authority to establish a budget and impose taxes (includes hospital districts). Other local governmental agencies should apply through an associated unit of local government.

## Application Process

Applicants must access the PSO's eGrants grant management website at <https://eGrants.gov.texas.gov> to register and apply for funding. For more instructions and information, see the OOG's *eGrants User Guide to Creating an Application*, available [here](#).

1. For eligible local and regional projects:
  - a. Applicants must contact their applicable regional council of governments (COG) regarding their application.
  - b. Each of Texas' 24 COGs holds its own application planning workshops, workgroups, and/or subcommittees and facilitates application prioritization for certain programs within its region. Failure to comply with regional requirements imposed by the COG may render an application ineligible.
2. State agencies, and other organizations proposing projects with a statewide impact, may submit applications directly to PSO.

Applicants are required to submit fully developed and detailed grant budgets at the time of application, PSO will not accept placeholder applications and/or budget line items in lieu of a well written and detailed grant application.

Non-profit applicants are limited to a single application per agency, and all other eligible organizations are limited to one application per unit, district or division.

## Key Dates

Action	Date
Funding Announcement Release	12/12/2022
Online System Opening Date	12/12/2022
Final Date to Submit and Certify an Application	2/09/2023 at 5:00pm CST
Project Start Date	10/01/2023

## Project Period

Projects **may not exceed 12 months** and must begin on or after 10/01/2023 and expire on or before 9/30/2024.

## Funding Levels

Minimum: \$10,000

Maximum: No Maximum

Match Requirement: None

Note: Applicants are strongly cautioned to only apply for the amount of funding they can responsibly expend in the grant period. PSO will be tracking expenditure rates throughout the life of the grants and may take action to avoid large de-obligations at the end of grant periods.

## Standards

Grantees must comply with standards applicable to this fund source cited in the Texas Grant Management Standards ([TxGMS](#)), [Federal Uniform Grant Guidance](#), and all statutes, requirements, and guidelines applicable to this funding.

## Eligible Activities and Costs

The following list of eligible activities and costs apply generally to all projects under this announcement.

### Crisis Services

- Services that respond to immediate needs (other than medical care), emotional, psychological, and physical health and safety including:
  - Crisis intervention services;
  - Accompanying victims to hospitals for medical examinations<sup>1</sup>;
  - Hotline counseling;
  - Safety planning;
  - Emergency food, clothing, and transportation;
  - Window, door, or lock replacement or repair, and other repairs necessary to ensure a victim's safety;
  - Costs of the following, on an emergency basis (i.e., when the State's compensation program, the victim's health insurance plan, Medicaid, or other health care funding source, is not reasonably expected to be available quickly enough to meet the emergency needs of a victim (typically within 48 hours of the crime): Non-prescription and prescription medicine, prophylactic or other treatment to prevent HIV/AIDS infection or other infectious disease, durable medical equipment (such as wheel-chairs, crutches, hearing aids, eyeglasses), and other healthcare items; in all cases the grant must be considered the option of last resort; and

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<sup>1</sup> Note related to hospital accompaniment with sexual assault survivors: In accordance with Art. 56A.351, Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, a victim shall be offered the opportunity to have a sexual assault program advocate available during a sexual assault forensic exam. Sec. 420.051, Texas Government Code defines a sexual assault program advocate as an individual who has completed a sexual assault training program certified by the attorney general and is an employee or volunteer of a sexual assault program.

- Emergency legal assistance, such as for filing for restraining or protective orders, and obtaining emergency custody orders and visitation rights;
- Personal advocacy and emotional support including:
  - Working with a victim to assess the impact of the crime;
  - Identification of victim's needs;
  - Case management;
  - Management of practical problems created by the victimization;
  - Identification of resources available to the victim;
  - Provision of information, referrals, advocacy, and follow-up contact for continued services, as needed;
  - Traditional, cultural, and/or alternative therapy/healing (e.g., art therapy, yoga – with appropriate training, certification, or licensure);
  - Transportation of victims to receive services and to participate in criminal justice proceedings; and
  - Public awareness and education presentations (including the development of presentation materials, brochures, newspaper notices, and public service announcements) in schools, community centers, and other public forums that are designed to inform crime victims of specific rights and services and provide them with (or refer them to) services and assistance, this activity will only be funded in conjunction with programs providing direct services.

**Forensic Interviews (with the following parameters):**

- Results of the interview will be used not only for law enforcement and prosecution purposes, but also for identification of needs such as social services, personal advocacy, case management, substance abuse treatment, and mental health services;
- Interviews are conducted in the context of a multi-disciplinary investigation and diagnostic team, or in a specialized setting such as a child advocacy center; and
- The interviewer is trained to conduct forensic interviews appropriate to the developmental age and abilities of children, or the developmental, cognitive, and physical or communication disabilities presented by adults.

**Legal Advocacy**

- Facilitating participation in criminal justice and other public proceedings arising from the crime, including:
  - Advocacy on behalf of a victim;
  - Accompanying a victim to offices and court;
  - Transportation, meals, and lodging to allow a victim who is not a witness to participate in a proceeding;
  - Interpreting for a non-witness victim who is deaf or hard of hearing, or with limited English proficiency;

- Providing child care and respite care to enable a victim who is a caregiver to attend activities related to the proceeding;
- Notification to victims regarding key proceeding dates (e.g., trial dates, case disposition, incarceration, and parole hearings);
- Assistance with Victim Impact Statements;
- Assistance in recovering property that was retained as evidence; and
- Assistance with restitution advocacy on behalf of crime victims.
- Legal assistance services (including those provided on an emergency basis), where reasonable and where the need for such services arises as a direct result of the victimization, including:
  - Those (other than criminal defense) that help victims assert their rights as victims in a criminal proceeding directly related to the victimization, or otherwise protect their safety, privacy, or other interests as victims in such a proceeding; and
  - Those actions (other than tort actions) that, in the civil context, are reasonably necessary as a direct result of the victimization.

#### **Multi-Disciplinary Teams and Case Coordination**

- Representatives of several agencies meet regularly to discuss common cases and share information to enhance investigation, prosecution, and victim restoration. Cases are followed through in this manner to closure. Participating agencies may include Child Protective Service, law enforcement, prosecutors' offices, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners or other medical personnel, mental health professionals, etc.

#### **Peer Support Groups**

- Peer-support, including activities that provide opportunities for victims to meet other victims, share experiences, and provide self-help, information, and emotional support.

#### **Professional Therapy and Counseling**

- Mental health counseling and care, including, but not limited to, out-patient therapy/counseling provided by a person who meets professional standards to provide these services in the jurisdiction in which the care is administered.

#### **Protective Order Assistance:**

- Legal representation provided by program staff and/or staff attorneys to obtain protective orders and assistance;
- May be provided by law enforcement personnel, prosecution staff or other service providers; and
- Services may be available at non-traditional locations and times.

#### **Shelter Programs**

- Providing a safe place for victims/survivors and their children;
- Short-term (up to 45 days) in-home care and supervision services for children and adults who remain in their own homes when the offender/caregiver is removed; and

- Short-term (up to 45 days) nursing-home, adult foster care, or group-home placement for adults for whom no other safe, short-term residence is available;

### **Victim-Offender Meetings**

- Meetings between the survivor and the offender who perpetrated the crime against the survivor. At a minimum grantees must consider:
  - The safety and security of the survivor;
  - The benefit of therapeutic value to the survivor;
  - The procedures for ensuring that participation of the survivor and offender are voluntary and that everyone understands the nature of any meeting or other activity;
  - The provision of appropriate support and accompaniment for the survivor;
  - Appropriate debriefing opportunities for the survivor after a meeting;
  - The credentials of the facilitators; and
  - The opportunity for a survivor to withdraw from the process at any time.

### **Transitional Housing**

- Travel, rental assistance, security deposits, utilities, and other costs incidental to relocation of survivors into transitional housing, as well as voluntary support services such as childcare and counseling. Provision of this service is limited to 18 months in duration per client and must require active participation in program services designed to enable self-sufficiency of the client. PSO should be considered the payee of last resort for this service. To be eligible, this service must be included in the original application budget prioritized by the local Council of Government's Criminal Justice Advisory Committee.

## **Program-Specific Requirements**

All projects under this funding announcement must meet the following requirements:

**Cultural competency:** Applicants must be culturally competent when providing services to victims. Victim service providers must have the ability to blend cultural knowledge and sensitivity with victim restoration skills for a more effective and culturally appropriate recovery process. Cultural competency occurs when: (1) cultural knowledge, awareness and sensitivity are integrated into action and policy; (2) the service is relevant to the needs of the community and provided by trained staff, board members, and management; and (3) an advocate or organization recognizes each client is different with different needs, feelings, ideas and barriers.

**Victim services assessment survey:** All recipients of funding under this announcement may be required to participate in a victim services assessment during their grant period, as directed by PSO.

### Special requirements for vehicle purchases:

Only non-profits will be eligible to purchase vehicles under this funding announcement. The vehicles must be for the purpose of transporting victims to receive various services.

## Eligibility Requirements

1. Entities receiving grant funds must demonstrate a record of effective services to victims of crime and financial support from sources other than the Crime Victims Fund; or substantial support from sources other than the Crime Victims Fund.
  - A program has demonstrated a record of effective direct services and support when, for example, it demonstrates the support and approval of its direct services by the community, its history of providing direct services in a cost-effective manner, and the breadth or depth of its financial support from sources other than the Crime Victims Fund.
  - A program has substantial financial support from sources other than the Crime Victims Fund when at least twenty-five percent of the program's funding in the year of, or the year preceding the award comes from such sources.
2. Local units of governments must comply with the Cybersecurity Training requirements described in Section 772.012 and Section 2054.5191 of the Texas Government Code. Local governments determined to not be in compliance with the cybersecurity requirements required by Section 2054.5191 of the Texas Government Code are ineligible for OOG grant funds until the second anniversary of the date the local government is determined ineligible. Government entities must annually certify their compliance with the training requirements using the [Cybersecurity Training Certification for State and Local Governments](#). A copy of the Training Certification must be uploaded to your eGrants application. For more information or to access available training programs, visit the Texas Department of Information Resources [Statewide Cybersecurity Awareness Training](#) page.
3. Entities receiving funds from PSO must be located in a county that has an average of 90% or above on both adult and juvenile dispositions entered into the computerized criminal history database maintained by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) as directed in the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, Chapter 66. This disposition completeness percentage is defined as the percentage of arrest charges a county reports to DPS for which a disposition has been subsequently reported and entered into the computerized criminal history system.

Counties applying for grant awards from the Office of the Governor must commit that the county will report at least 90% of convictions within five business days to the Criminal Justice Information System at the Department of Public Safety.
4. Eligible applicants operating a law enforcement agency must be current on reporting complete UCR data and the Texas specific reporting mandated by 411.042 TGC, to the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) for inclusion in the annual Crime in Texas (CIT) publication. To be considered eligible for funding, applicants must have submitted a full twelve months of accurate data to DPS for the most recent calendar year by the deadline(s) established by DPS. Due to the importance of timely reporting, applicants are required to submit complete and accurate UCR data, as well as the Texas-mandated reporting, on a no less than monthly basis and respond promptly to requests from DPS related to the data submitted.

5. Local units of government, including cities, counties and other general purpose political subdivisions, as appropriate, and institutions of higher education that operate a law enforcement agency, must comply with all aspects of the programs and procedures utilized by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) to: (1) notify DHS of all information requested by DHS related to illegal aliens in Agency’s custody; and (2) detain such illegal aliens in accordance with requests by DHS. Additionally, counties and municipalities may NOT have in effect, purport to have in effect, or make themselves subject to or bound by, any law, rule, policy, or practice (written or unwritten) that would: (1) require or authorize the public disclosure of federal law enforcement information in order to conceal, harbor, or shield from detection fugitives from justice or aliens illegally in the United States; or (2) impede federal officers from exercising authority under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), § 1226(c), § 1231(a), § 1357(a), § 1366(1), or § 1366(3). Lastly, eligible applicants must comply with all provisions, policies, and penalties found in Chapter 752, Subchapter C of the Texas Government Code.

Each local unit of government, and institution of higher education that operates a law enforcement agency, must download, complete and then upload into eGrants the [CEO/Law Enforcement Certifications and Assurances Form](#) certifying compliance with federal and state immigration enforcement requirements. This Form is required for each application submitted to OOG and is active until August 31, 2024, or the end of the grant period, whichever is later.

6. Each non-profit 501(c)(3) organization must certify that it does not have, and will continue not to have any policy, procedure, or agreement (written or unwritten) that in any way encourages, induces, entices, or aids any violations of immigration laws. Additionally, the organization certifies that it does not have in effect, purport to have in effect, and is not subject to or bound by any rule, policy, or practice (written or unwritten) that would: (1) encourage the concealment, harboring, or shielding from detection of fugitives from justice or aliens who illegally came to, entered, or remained in the United States; or (2) impede federal officers from exercising authority under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), § 1226(c), § 1231(a), § 1357(a), § 1366(1), or § 1366(3). Lastly, the organization certifies that it will not adopt, enforce, or endorse a policy which prohibits or materially limits the enforcement of immigration laws, and will not, as demonstrated by pattern or practice, prohibit or materially limit the enforcement of immigration laws.

Each non-profit organization must download, complete and then upload into eGrants the [CEO/NGO Certifications and Assurances Form](#) certifying compliance with federal and state immigration enforcement requirements.

7. Eligible applicants must be registered in the federal System for Award Management (SAM) database located at <https://www.sam.gov/>.

Failure to comply with program or eligibility requirements may cause funds to be withheld and/or suspension or termination of grant funds.

## Prohibitions

Grant funds may not be used to support the unallowable costs listed in the [Guide to Grants](#) or any of the following unallowable costs:

1. Lobbying or advocacy activities with respect to legislation or to administrative changes to regulations or administrative policy (cf. 18 U.S.C. 1913), whether conducted directly or indirectly;



2. The active investigation and prosecution of criminal activity, except for the provision of victim assistance services (e.g., emotional support, advocacy, and legal services) to crime victims, under 28 CFR § 94.119, during such investigation and prosecution;
3. Any activities related to fundraising;
4. Capital improvements; property losses and expenses; real estate purchases; mortgage payments; remodeling; and construction;
5. Reimbursement of crime victims for expenses incurred as a result of a crime;
6. Salaries, benefits, fees, furniture, equipment, and other expenses of executive directors, board members, and other administrators (except as specifically allowed);
7. Counseling or treatment for substance abuse (general counseling that includes a component addressing substance abuse is eligible);
8. Victim-offender meetings that serve to replace (or as a part of) criminal justice proceedings;
9. Medical training;
10. Medical care or expenses (except as specifically allowed);
11. Forensic medical evidence collection to include the salary, overtime or on-call cost of SANE Nurses;
12. Cash payments to victims, gift cards, or fuel vouchers;
13. Creation of a voucher program where victims are directly given vouchers for such services as housing or counseling;
14. Transportation, lodging, per diem or any related costs for third-party participants to attend a training, when grant funds are used to develop and conduct training;
15. Leasing of vehicles;
16. Training of external partners or the community;
17. Program income;
18. Research and studies;
19. Activities that may compromise victim safety;
20. Entertainment, including amusement, diversion, social activities, field trips, excursions and any associated costs (i.e. tickets to shows or sports events, meals, lodging, rentals, transportation, and gratuities) unless there is a clear programmatic purpose and the costs are approved in advance by PSO; and
21. Nonessential maintenance on buildings, lawn care, and landscaping; and
22. Any other prohibition imposed by federal, state or local law or regulation.

## Selection Process

**Application Screening:** The Office of the Governor will screen all applications to ensure that they meet the requirements included in the funding announcement.

**Merit Review – Local Projects:** Projects with a local impact will be reviewed by a panel appointed by the local Council of Governments using their own criteria. The merit review panels will assess the applications for quality and rank by priority, and then report their findings to the Office of the Governor. Applicants must contact their applicable regional Council of Governments (COG). Each of Texas' 24 COGs holds its own application planning workshops, workgroups, and/or subcommittees and facilitates application prioritization for certain programs within its region. Failure to comply with regional requirements imposed by the COG may render an application ineligible.

**Merit Review – Statewide Projects:** The Office of the Governor will review applications to understand the overall demand for the program and for significant variations in costs per item. After this review, the Office of the Governor will determine if all eligible applications can be funded based on funds available, if there are cost-effectiveness benefits to normalizing or setting limits on the range of costs, and if other fair-share cuts may allow for broader distribution and a higher number of projects while still remaining effective.

**Final Decisions – All Projects:** The Office of the Governor will consider rankings along with other factors and make all final funding decisions. Other factors may include cost effectiveness, overall funds availability, PSO or state government priorities and strategies, legislative directives, need, geographic distribution, or other relevant factors.

PSO may not fund all applications or may only award part of the amount requested. In the event that funding requests exceed available funds, PSO may revise projects to address a more limited focus.

## Contact Information

For more information, contact the eGrants help desk at [eGrants@gov.texas.gov](mailto:eGrants@gov.texas.gov) or (512) 463-1919.