



# Office of the Governor, Public Safety Office Criminal Justice Division Funding Announcement: *Specialty Courts Grant Program, FY2024*

## Purpose

The purpose of this announcement is to solicit applications for specialty court programs as defined in Chapters 121 through 129 of the Texas Government Code as well as the continuation of a training and technical assistance resource center.

## Available Funding

State funds are authorized under the Texas General Appropriations Act, Article I, Rider 12 for Trusteed Programs within the Office of the Governor. All awards are subject to the availability of appropriated funds and any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law.

## Eligible Organizations

Applications may be submitted by county governments affiliated with a specialty court authorized under Chapters 121 through 129 of the Texas Government Code. Applications may also be submitted by a public institution of higher education for the continuation of a training and technical assistance resource center.

Counties seeking to establish a new specialty court program are eligible to apply but must meet registration requirements, as defined in 121.002 Texas Government Code, within 30 days of award. Existing specialty court programs that do not currently receive PSO funding are also eligible to apply but must annotate in their application how the additional funds will expand the program beyond its current capacity. Priority for applications received from new applicants may be given to courts operating in jurisdictions without a currently operational court or based on demonstrated need.

## Application Process

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

Note: Special application procedures apply to this program. See the [Special Application Procedures Addendum](#) for more information.

## 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
Earliest Project Start Date	09/01/2023

## Project Period

Projects must begin on or after 09/01/2023 and may not exceed a 12-month project period.

## Funding Levels

Minimum: \$10,000

Maximum: None

Match Requirement: Optional. There is no match requirement under this program, but an eligible entity may choose to include match in the application. If match is included in the application, the applicant agency will be held to provide that specified amount over the course of the project period.

## 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

Funding may be used to support the following types of specialty court programs:

1. Adult Drug Court;
2. Family Drug Court;
3. Veterans Treatment Court;
4. Mental Health Court;
5. Juvenile Specialty Court;
6. Commercially Sexually Exploited Persons Court; and
7. Public Safety Employees Treatment Court;

Funding may also be used to provide training, professional development, and/or technical assistance in furtherance of the Specialty Courts Resource Center operated through a public institution of higher education.

## Program-Specific Requirements

### Risk Assessment Tools

Grantees are required to perform the full, felony-level TRAS (Texas Risk Assessment System) assessment on each participant enrolled during the project period. Sub-section scores must be recorded and reported in the annual progress reports. Grantees must also include the TRAS scores for all adult participants (including those in pre-adjudication court programs) in their regular reports to the Criminal Justice Assistance Division (CJAD) of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, as directed by CJAD.

The TRAS is not applicable to family reunification courts, courts dealing with adults without pending criminal charges, and juvenile courts. Juvenile courts are required to perform the PACT risk assessment as mandated by the Texas Juvenile Justice Department.

### Registration Requirements

The court program must meet all requirements in the Texas Government Code, Section 121.002, which include:

1. Written notice of the program;
2. Any resolution or other official declaration under which the program was established; and
3. A copy of the applicable community justice plan that incorporates duties related to supervision that will be required under the program.

For more information on how to register please contact the Office of Court Administration at: [SpecialtyCourts@txcourts.gov](mailto:SpecialtyCourts@txcourts.gov).

### Best Practices Assessment Requirement

All applicants are required to have completed the BeSt Assessment (Best Practices Self-Assessment Tool) within the last two years. The Specialty Courts Resource Center (SCRC) operated by Sam Houston State University will collect all assessment results and provide them to PSO to be included with each application during the review and scoring process. In order to access the BeST Assessment, please contact the SCRC Project Manager at [agregory@shsu.edu](mailto:agregory@shsu.edu).

### Judge Requirements

The presiding judge of a drug court must be an active judge holding elective office, an associate judge, a magistrate, or a retired judge available as a sitting judge.

### Participation in Training and Technical Assistance Program

Grantees are required to participate in activities under the Specialty Courts Resource Center (SCRC) operated by Sam Houston State University and funded by PSO. Information about services and resources provided by SCRC can be accessed at <http://txspecialtycourts.org/>.

### Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards

The Texas Judicial Council unanimously approved the National Association of Drug Court professionals (NADCP) Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards (Volumes I & II) as the best practices for adult drug court programs. All adult drug court programs must have substantially implemented best practice standards.

### Family Drug Court Best Practice Standards

The Texas Judicial Council unanimously approved the National Association of Drug Court professionals (NADCP) Family Treatment Court Best Practice Standards as the best practices for family drug court programs. All family drug court programs must have substantially implemented these best practice standards.

## Eligibility Requirements

1. 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.
2. 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. The 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.

3. 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.
4. 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.

5. In accordance with Texas Government Code, Section 420.034, any facility or entity that collects evidence for sexual assault or other sex offenses or investigates or prosecutes a sexual assault or other sex offense for which evidence has been collected, must participate in the statewide electronic tracking system developed and implemented by the Texas Department of Public Safety. Visit DPS's [Sexual Assault Evidence Tracking Program](#) website for more information or to set up an account to begin participating.
6. Eligible applicants must be registered in the federal System for Award Management (SAM) database and have an UEI (Unique Entity ID) number assigned to its agency (to get registered in the SAM database and request an UEI number, go to <https://sam.gov/>).

Failure to comply with program 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. Construction, renovation, or remodeling;
2. Medical services;
3. Law enforcement equipment that is standard department issue;
4. Transportation, lodging, per diem or any related costs for participants, when grant funds are used to develop and conduct training;
5. Legal assistance;
6. Judges; and
7. 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. Applications that meet those requirements will move forward to the merit review phase.

**Peer/Merit Review:** The Office of the Governor will convene a panel, to include the Specialty Courts Advisory Council (SCAC), to review and score applications in an effort to prioritize funding. The merit review panel will assess and score each application on a 100-point scale, and then report its findings to the Office of the Governor. For adult drug courts (including alcohol/DWI courts), adherence to the *Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards* will be an important factor in decisions. PSO will generally not fund projects that serve primarily low-risk participants, as determined by a TRAS assessment.

**Final Decisions:** 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.

The Office of the Governor may not fund all applications or may only award part of the amount requested. In the event that funding requests exceed available funds, the Office of the Governor 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.

## Project Narrative

Within eGrants, applicants will complete several narrative fields. Below are special instructions related to required information that must be included in your Specialty Court Program Narrative. These instructions are not contained on eGrants, so applicants must review the instructions below. Failure to provide the information requested may result in an application being deemed ineligible for funding.

Applicants must describe how their court program is meeting/fulfilling the applicable Essential Characteristics as defined in Chapter 122-126, and 129 of the Texas Government Code.

### Family Drug Courts

**Project Approach & Activities:** In addition to the Essential Characteristics listed below, applicants must provide a detailed summary addressing how the program meets or plans to meet the Family Treatment Court Best Practice Standards.

- The integration of substance abuse treatment services in the processing of civil cases in the child welfare system with the goal of family reunification.
- The use of a comprehensive case management approach involving Department of Family and Protective Services caseworkers, court-appointed case managers, and court-appointed special advocates to rehabilitate a parent who has had a child removed from the parent's care by the department because of suspected child abuse or neglect and who is suspected of substance abuse.
- A progressive treatment approach with specific requirements that a parent must meet to advance to the next phase of the program.
- Ongoing judicial interaction with program participants.

**Capacity & Capabilities:** In addition to the Essential Characteristics listed below, applicants must provide all members and their respective roles on the court team and include any other state and/or local fund sources utilized to fund this program.

- Comprehensive substance abuse needs assessment and referral to an appropriate substance abuse treatment agency.
- Monitoring of abstinence through periodic alcohol or other drug testing.
- Development of partnerships with public agencies and community organizations.

**Performance Management:** In addition to the Essential Characteristic listed below, applicants must describe the procedures for how performance measures are currently used to identify and address deficiencies within the program.

- Monitoring and evaluation of program goals and effectiveness.

### Target Group:

- Early identification and prompt placement of eligible parents who volunteer to participate in the program.

**Evidence-Based practices:**

- Continuing interdisciplinary education to promote effective program planning, implementation, and operations.

## Drug Courts

**Project Approach & Activities:** In addition to the Essential Characteristics listed below, applicants must provide a detailed summary addressing how the program meets or plans to meet the Adult Drug Court Best Practice Standards.

- The integration of alcohol and other drug treatment services in the processing of cases in the judicial system.
- The use of a nonadversarial approach involving prosecutors and defense attorneys to promote public safety and to protect the due process rights of program participants.
- A coordinated strategy to govern program responses to participants' compliance.
- Ongoing judicial interaction with program participants.

**Capacity & Capabilities:** In addition to the Essential Characteristics listed below, applicants must provide all members and their respective roles on the court team and include any other state and/or local fund sources utilized to fund this program.

- Access to a continuum of alcohol, drug, and other related treatment and rehabilitative services.
- Monitoring of abstinence through weekly alcohol and other drug testing.
- Development of partnerships with public agencies and community organizations.

**Performance Management:** In addition to the Essential Characteristic listed below, applicants must describe the procedures for how performance measures are currently used to identify and address deficiencies within the program.

- Monitoring and evaluation of program goals and effectiveness.

**Target Group:**

- Early identification and prompt placement of eligible participants in the program.

**Evidence-Based practices:**

- Continuing interdisciplinary education to promote effective program planning, implementation, and operations.

## Veterans Treatment Courts

**Project Approach & Activities:** In addition to the Essential Characteristics listed below, applicants must provide a detailed summary addressing how the program meets or plans to meet the key components of a specialty (treatment) court.

- The integration of services in the processing of cases in the judicial system.



- The use of a nonadversarial approach involving prosecutors and defense attorneys to promote public safety and to protect the due process rights of program participants.
- A coordinated strategy to govern program responses to participants' compliance.
- Ongoing judicial interaction with program participants.

**Capacity & Capabilities:** In addition to the Essential Characteristics listed below, applicants must provide all members and their respective roles on the court team and include any other state and/or local fund sources utilized to fund this program.

- Access to a continuum of alcohol, controlled substance, mental health, and other related treatment and rehabilitative services.
- Careful monitoring of treatment and services provided to program participants.
- Development of partnerships with public agencies and community organizations, including the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Performance Management:** In addition to the Essential Characteristic listed below, applicants must describe the procedures for how performance measures are currently used to identify and address deficiencies within the program.

- Monitoring and evaluation of program goals and effectiveness.

**Target Group:**

- Early identification and prompt placement of eligible participants in the program.  
Inclusion of a participant's family members who agree to be involved in the treatment and services provided to the participant under the program.

**Evidence-Based practices:**

- Continuing interdisciplinary education to promote effective program planning, implementation, and operations.

**Mental Health Courts**

**Project Approach & Activities:** In addition to the Essential Characteristics listed below, applicants must provide a detailed summary addressing how the program meets or plans to meet the key components of a specialty (treatment) court.

- The integration of mental illness treatment services and mental retardation services in the processing of cases in the judicial system.
- The use of a nonadversarial approach involving prosecutors and defense attorneys to promote public safety and to protect the due process rights of program participants.
- Diversion of potentially mentally ill or mentally retarded defendants to needed services as an alternative to subjecting those defendants to the criminal justice system.
- Ongoing judicial interaction with program participants.

**Capacity & Capabilities:** In addition to the Essential Characteristics listed below, applicants must provide all members and their respective roles on the court team and include any other state and/or local fund sources utilized to fund this program.

- Access to mental illness treatment services.
- Development of partnerships with public agencies and community organizations, including local mental health authorities (LMHA).

**Performance Management:** In addition to the Essential Characteristic listed below, applicants must describe the procedures for how performance measures are currently used to identify and address deficiencies within the program.

- Monitoring and evaluation of program goals and effectiveness.

**Target Group:**

- Early identification and prompt placement of eligible participants in the program.

**Evidence-Based practices:**

- Continuing interdisciplinary education to promote effective program planning, implementation, and operations.

### Commercially Sexually Exploited Persons Courts

**Project Approach & Activities:** In addition to the Essential Characteristics listed below, applicants must provide a detailed summary addressing how the program meets or plans to meet the key components of a specialty (treatment) court.

- The integration of services in the processing of cases in the judicial system.
- The use of a nonadversarial approach involving prosecutors and defense attorneys to promote public safety, to reduce the demand for the commercial sex trade and trafficking of persons by educating offenders, and to protect the due process rights of program participants.
- A coordinated strategy to govern program responses to participant compliance.

**Capacity & Capabilities:** In addition to the Essential Characteristics listed below, applicants must provide all members and their respective roles on the court team and include any other state and/or local fund sources utilized to fund this program.

- Access to information, counseling, and services relating to sex addiction, sexually transmitted diseases, mental health, and substance abuse.
- Development of partnerships with public agencies and community organizations.

**Performance Management:** In addition to the Essential Characteristic listed below, applicants must describe the procedures for how performance measures are currently used to identify and address deficiencies within the program.

- Monitoring and evaluation of program goals and effectiveness.

**Target Group:**

- Early identification and prompt placement of eligible participants in the program.

**Evidence-Based practices:**

- Continuing interdisciplinary education to promote effective program planning, implementation, and operations.

**Public Safety Employees Treatment Courts**

**Project Approach & Activities:** In addition to the Essential Characteristics listed below, applicants must provide a detailed summary addressing how the program meets or plans to meet the key components of a specialty (treatment) court.

- The integration of services in the processing of cases in the judicial system.
- The use of a nonadversarial approach involving prosecutors and defense attorneys to promote public safety and to protect the due process rights of program participants.
- A coordinated strategy to govern program responses to participants' compliance.
- Ongoing judicial interaction with program participants.

**Capacity & Capabilities:** In addition to the Essential Characteristics listed below, applicants must provide all members and their respective roles on the court team and include any other state and/or local fund sources utilized to fund this program.

- access to a continuum of alcohol, controlled substance, mental health, and other related treatment and rehabilitative services
- Careful monitoring of treatment and services provided to program participants.
- Development of partnerships with public agencies and community organizations.

**Performance Management:** In addition to the Essential Characteristic listed below, applicants must describe the procedures for how performance measures are currently used to identify and address deficiencies within the program.

- Monitoring and evaluation of program goals and effectiveness.

**Target Group:**

- Early identification and prompt placement of eligible participants in the program.
- Inclusion of a participant's family members who agree to be involved in the treatment and services provided to the participant under the program.

**Evidence-Based practices:**

- Continuing interdisciplinary education to promote effective program planning, implementation, and operations.