

Amanda Nowak: Hello and welcome to the Fiscal Year 2023 Second Chance Act Programs webinar. We appreciate you taking the time to join us today to learn more about these funding opportunities. My name is Amanda Nowak, a Senior Program Associate on the Unlocking Potential Team at the Vera Institute of Justice. I'll be joined in today's presentation by Andre Bethea, who is a policy advisor at the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

Today we are going to do a quick overview of BJA and the Second Chance Act, followed by a review of the available funding opportunities, and finally, a quick section on additional information. A few notes: The link to the solicitations is here on the right. The solicitation document will outline key information on eligibility, required components, deadlines, and instructions about the application process. We encourage you to read the applications closely for a full understanding of what is expected. All questions about solicitations need to be directed to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, or NCJRS, to ensure applicants all have access to the same information and answers. Applications have two deadlines this year, one to register and one to submit. So please read all information carefully. And now, I'll hand things over to Andre to give us an overview of BJA.

Andre Bethea: Thanks, Amanda. Hello, everyone. My name is Andre Bethea. I'm a Senior Policy Advisor here at the US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance. We are a part of the Office of Justice Programs.

What is the Office of Justice Programs? OJP provides grant funding, training, research and statistics to the criminal justice community. OJP is one of three grant making components of the Department of Justice, along with the Office on Violence Against Women and the Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services. BJA is one of six divisions within the Office of Justice Programs. We have the SMART office, which is the Office of Sex Offender, Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering and Tracking. OJJDP, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; OVC, the Office for Victims of Crime; the research arm, which is the National Institute of Justice, NIJ; the statistical arm of Justice Department, which is the Bureau of Justice Statistics, BJS; and BJA, the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

At BJA, our mission is to provide leadership and services and grant administration and criminal justice policy development to support local, state, and tribal law enforcement in achieving safer communities. Check us out at [www.BJA.gov](http://www.BJA.gov).

This funding stream comes from the Second Chance Act, which is funding to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for youth and adults leaving detention and incarceration to return to their communities. Second Chance Act, or SCA, was first signed in 2008 and then was reauthorized under the First Step Act in 2018. Through Second Chance Act, more than 500 million in grants have been

administered to develop, implement, and test strategies that covers, supports and state, local, and tribal governments as well as nonprofit organizations.

So what happens with BJA's Second Chance Act funding? Well, grant funding can be used as seed money, best proof of concept, and expand or enhance an existing program. Through Second Chance ACT funding, BJA also provides training and technical assistance to grantees so that they are operating with fidelity, moving in line with the latest research, and being assisted with project management and content expertise. BJA Second Chance Act funding also provides for the National Reentry Resource Center, which is support to Second Chance Act training and technical assistance providers as well as the reentry field at large.

Another word about the National Reentry Resource Center: It is currently operated by the American Institute for Research and it is a collaborative project of the Bureau Justice Assistance as well as the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The primary mission of the National Reentry Resource Center is to advance the knowledge base of the reentry field. The NRRC serves as a convener and coordinator of all Second Chance Act grantees.

Amanda Nowak: Thanks Andre.

Andre Bethea: Thank you, Amanda.

Amanda Nowak: Thank you, thank you. Now please allow me to tell you a little bit more about Vera. So we provide technical training and assistance to BJA grantees who are implementing education and employment training. In addition, we also connect grantees to peer networks, best practices, and other resources. If you have a question or concern on the implementation of your grant, we will be happy to work with you and guide you through the process.

Vera is also joined by RTI International, a firm of subject matter experts in secondary and post-secondary education as well as evaluation. Both Vera and our partners rely on RTI to ensure that the work we are doing is supported by evidence-based, best practices. I'll now turn it back over to Andre to provide an overview of the current solicitations available and more specifically, the improving Reentry Education and Employment Outcomes solicitation.

Andre Bethea: Thanks, Amanda. So, there are six other Second Chance Act funding opportunities in fiscal year 2023. We have Community Reentry, Pay for Success, Improving Adult and Juvenile Crisis Stabilization and Community Reentry, Swift, Certain and Fair Supervision from the Hope Institute, Improving Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Reentry Outcomes for Adults in Reentry, as well as Smart Supervision.

Today, we're going to discuss the Second Chance Act: Improving Reentry Education and Employment Outcomes. Through this solicitation, the Bureau of

Justice Assistance seeks applications for funding reentry services and programs focusing on strengthening education and employment outcomes for individuals returning from incarceration. The Improving Reentry Education and Employment Outcomes Program is designed to improve correctional educational and employment programs that serve individuals during incarceration and throughout their period of reentry into the community. It promotes an evidence-based and data-informed approach that will provide meaningful opportunities, interrupt the cycle of unemployment, and promote reentry success for formerly incarcerated adults. This particular solicitation, Improving Reentry Education and Employment Outcomes, is open and live now. There are two deadlines. The grants.gov deadline for registration is March 28th, 2023 at 8:59 PM Eastern Time. The completed application must be submitted in JustGrants before or on April 4th, 2023, 8:59 PM Eastern Time.

So let's go into more about the Improving Reentry Education and Employment Outcomes. The purpose of this solicitation is to enhance correctional systems' ability to implement and expand education and employment programs that serve individuals during incarceration and throughout their period of reentry into the community. Programs funded under this solicitation should emphasize strong partnerships with corrections, parole, probation, education, workforce development, and reentry service providers. Programs should be focused on serving individuals during the three-year period before release, as well as providing ongoing service provision throughout participants' period of reentry into the community. These programs will work to reduce recidivism, promote reentry success, enhance employment and economic mobility prospects for incarcerated individuals reentering the workforce.

So let's look at the who entities, which entities are actually eligible for the Improving Reentry Education and Employment Outcomes program. City or township governments, county governments, for profit organizations other than small businesses, independent school districts, Native American tribal governments that are federally recognized, nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education. Also eligible are nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education. Special district governments may apply for this funding, state governments as well as others. BJA will consider applications under which two or more entities will carry out the federal award. However, only one entity may be the lead applicant and the others must be proposed as subrecipients or subgrantees.

Let's talk about additional eligibility requirements. To advance Executive Order 13929 Safe Policing for Safe Communities, the Attorney General has determined that all state, local, and university or college law enforcement agencies must be certified by an approved independent credentialing body or have started the certification process to be eligible for the fiscal year 2023 DOJ discretionary grant programs. The certification requirement also applies to law enforcement agencies receiving DOJ discretionary grant funding through a subaward.

To become certified, the law enforcement agency must meet two mandatory conditions. Number one, the agency's use-of-force policies adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws. And number two, the agency's use-of-force policies prohibit choke holds except in situations where use of deadly force is allowable by law.

There's a link for the Standards for Certification on Safe Policing for Safer Communities. And subsequently, there's also a fact sheet available which identifies a list of credentialing bodies. And I believe I turn it back over to you, Amanda.

Amanda Nowak:

Yes, thank you so much, Andre. So within this grant track there are two categories. Category 1 is improving correctional education. The goal of Category 1 is to improve the educational and vocational education programs available to incarcerated individuals in prisons and jails, and upon return to the community. Services should begin prior to release from incarceration and continue throughout the participants' period of reentry. There are three objectives in this category. The first objective is to implement or expand educational and vocational programs for incarcerated adults that result in improved educational outcomes, as measured by literacy attainment, high school equivalence, high school and higher education diplomas, certifications, and other credentials. The second objective is to demonstrate increased collaboration between educational providers and corrections, community supervision providers, and other reentry stakeholders. And the third objective is to implement or expand post-secondary education and operations with a focus on the mandated Pell reinstatement for incarcerated students.

And the deliverables expected are to develop an action plan with input from BJA and an assigned technical assistance coach submitted within six months of receiving final budget approval as well as a final report at the end of the project period. For Category 1, there are 10 awards available, with a total of \$900,000 for each award. The performance start date is 12:00 AM on October 1st, 2023, and the performance duration will be for 36 months.

Category 1 uses of funds that are permitted include expenses that establish, improve, or expand educational and vocational programming and services for incarcerated individuals, including competency-based learning using a range of services from literacy, high school diploma or equivalency, higher education to labor market needs-informed vocational education, as well as expenses that establish, improve, or expand post-secondary educational programs and operations to meet the mandated Pell reinstatement for incarcerated individuals.

The next category, Category 2, is entitled Improving Employment Services and Connections. This category has two goals. The first goal is to provide career training, including subsidized employment when part of a training program to adults incarcerated in prisons and jails and upon return to the community.

Services should begin prior to release from incarceration and continue throughout the participants' period of reentry. The second goal is to remove regulatory employment barriers for incarcerated adults returning to communities.

Category 2 also has two objectives. They are, one, to implement or expand job readiness assessments, individualized case plans, and employment related services for incarcerated adults that result in improved employment readiness, attainment and retention. And, two, articulate and implement a robust vision for reentry employment with transitional supports and a focus on employment. And as with Category 1, Category 2 deliverables are to develop an action plan with input from BJA and a technical assistance coach submitted within six months of receiving final budget approval and a final report at the end of the project period. For Category 2, there are a total of 16 awards available. Similar to Category 1, up to \$900,000 is available for each award. The performance start date is 12:00 AM on October 1st, 2023, and the performance duration will be for 36 months.

In Category 2 in particular, there is a restriction of internet access and correctional settings requirement that applicants must adhere to. In addition, there are priority areas specific to Category 2, namely applicants can receive priority consideration for applications that provide an assessment of local demand for employees in the geographic areas to which incarcerated individuals are likely to return, as well as job training grants that look at the local labor or job markets in communities where individuals who are leaving incarceration are returning and/or conduct individualized reentry career planning upon the start of incarceration or post-release employment planning for each individual served under the grant and/or demonstrate connections to employers within the local community and/or track and monitor employment outcomes.

There are several allowable uses of funds. That includes funds that support programming that establish, improve, or expand career training programs that are informed by labor market needs in the geographic areas to which incarcerated individuals will return, continually assesses local demand for employees in the geographic areas to which incarcerated individuals are likely to return and adjust educational and employment goals accordingly, develops partnerships with local employers, increase the quality and quantity of training, skills-building, and pre-apprenticeship programs available to incarcerated persons, connect individualized reentry career planning programs at the start of incarceration or post-release employment planning programs for program participants, subsidizes wages or other employment costs as part of a career training program, provides transitional services to assist in the reintegration of incarcerated individuals into the community, trains corrections and service provider leadership and staff and career training programming, and tracks and monitors employment outcomes. So, I will now turn it back over to Andre to take a deeper dive into the requirements for all categories.

Andre Bethea: Greatly appreciated, Amanda. So we're going to continue discussing Second Chance Act, Improving Reentry Education and Employment Outcomes grant program. And now we're discussing requirements for all categories. If you are not the correctional partner, if you are the lead applicant and you are not a correctional agency, then you must provide an MOU/MOA, memorandum of agreement, memorandum of understanding, with a correctional agency that clearly demonstrates an established collaborative relationship between the applicant and the correctional agency that, number one, oversee the specific facility or facilities from which the applicant proposes to recruit the target reentering population. And, number two, oversee community corrections, probation or parole, for the target population. A letter from the warden is not accepted. It must be from the highest level official for that agency, for that correctional agency.

Again, if you have an MOU with a correctional agency and you are not the lead applicant, as a correctional agency, you're not the lead applicant, whether you're a nonprofit, whether you're another type of government agency, you must have this MOU/MOA with a correctional agency and it must be signed by the highest level official at the correctional agency. The MOU must include the roles and responsibilities for staff from both agencies involved in the program, terms of access to the correctional facility or facilities for the program staff. If applicants are unable to conduct and reach into the correctional facilities, the application should explain the reasons why such access is not practical.

Information on pre-release programming and interventions provided by the correctional agency to each participant. You also must provide the data elements of performance measures that the partnering agencies will provide or assist the grantee in obtaining for the purpose of measuring the impact of grant activities. That means if you are a nonprofit, school, or non-government entity, you still have to be responsible as the lead applicant to assist or work with a correctional agency that's going to assist you in providing the data elements, such as recidivism rates and performance measures, in regards to this particular grant funding. Also, the MOA/MOU should include a description of the evidence-based programming and or intervention for the target population.

Let's talk about other requirements for all categories. Pre-release access. Participants are expected to be screened, assessed, and identified for program participation pre-release. During the post-release phase of the education/employment program, participants must receive case management services and be connected to evidence-based programming designed to assist in the transition from prison or jail to the community. Where feasible, case management services and evidence-based programming should begin during the pre-release phase.

Now, this next requirement is only applicable if you're working with a tribal nation or if you're a tribal nation that's applying for funding. Tribal authorizing resolution. An application in response to this solicitation may require inclusion

of tribal authorizing documentation as an attachment. If applicable, the applicant will submit the tribal authorizing documentation by uploading it as an attachment and JustGrants. See the link to the OJP Grant Application Resource Guide for information on tribal authorizing resolutions.

Now we're going to tap into the budget information that is required for all categories. Applicants must budget funding to travel to DOJ-sponsored grant meetings. Applicants should estimate the cost of travel and accommodations for teams of three to attend two meetings for three days each in Washington, DC. All grantees will access up to \$100,000 until the action plan is approved by BJA during the first six months of the grant period, after the final budget is approved.

Let's talk about that a little bit more in depth. We put them both under budget information, so let's just unpack it a bit. The first bullet is specifically for travel. Wherever you are, estimate how much it would cost for a team of three to attend two separate meetings at some point during the 36 months of your participation in this particular grant program. The estimation is travel from wherever you are located to Washington, DC. The next bullet under budget information, all grantees will have access of only up to \$100,000 until your action plan is approved by BJA, and that's during the first six months of the grant period and after the final budget is approved. Therefore, any expenses incurred prior to the approval of your final budget is not allowed. You only access up to \$100,000 after the final budget is approved.

Now, we're going to discuss some unallowable uses for award funds. In addition to the unallowable cost identified in the DOJ Grants Financial Guide, award funds may not be used for the following: You cannot use these award funds for prizes, rewards, entertainment, trinkets, or any type of monetary incentive. Client stipends are unallowable. Gift cards are unallowable. Purchasing a vehicle, leasing a vehicle, unallowable, unallowable. Anything pertaining to food and beverage, unallowable.

Now we're going to discuss priority considerations for all categories. Priority considerations supporting Executive Order 13985, advancing racial equity support for underserved communities through the federal government. In support of Executive Order 13985, the Office of Justice Programs will give priority consideration to the following: first, applications that propose projects that are designed to 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. To receive this consideration, the applicant must describe how the proposed project will address potential racial inequities and contribute to greater access to services and opportunities for these communities, and communities and populations that have been disproportionately impacted by crime, violence and criminal justice system overall.

In support of Executive Order 13985, the Office of Justice programs will give priority consideration to the following: Applicants that demonstrate their capabilities and competencies for implementing their proposed projects are enhanced because they, or at least one proposed sub-recipient that will receive at least 40% of the requested of award funding as demonstrated in the budget web-based form, identify as a culturally specific organization. Well, to receive this additional priority consideration, applicants must describe how being a culturally specific organization, or funding the culturally specific subrecipient organization, will enhance their ability to implement the proposed project and should also specify which populations are intended or expected to be served or have their needs addressed under the proposed project.

Now we're going to go into some additional information.

So again, we're going to reference the dual deadline. Applications will be submitted to the Department of Justice in two steps. Step one, the applicant must submit by the grants.gov deadline, the required Application for Federal Assistance standard form, which is (SF)-424, and the Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, which is forms (SF-LLL), when they register and grants.gov, and we have the link there. To register and grants.gov, the applicant will need to ensure that its systems for award management, or SAM, registration is current. So that should happen before you attempt to apply to grants.gov. So if you are listening to this solicitation webinar, the first thing you and your leadership should discuss, is whether or not your system for award management, or SAM, registration is current.

The next step, again, dual deadlines, two two-step process, the second step, the applicant must then submit the full application, including attachments in JustGrants at justgrants.usdoj.gov. To be considered timely, the full application must be submitted in JustGrants by the JustGrants application deadline. The Office of Justice program encourages applicants to review the how to apply sections and the OJP Grant Application Resource Guide, we have a link to that, and the JustGrants website for more information, resources, and training. All of this is identified inside the actual solicitation for fiscal year 2023 Second Chance Act Improving Reentry Education and Employment Outcomes grant program. Again, the grants.gov deadline is March 28th, 2023 at 8:59 PM Eastern Time. And the deadline for the full application inside of JustGrants is April 4th, 2023 at 8:59 PM Eastern Time.

So let's just go through an application checklist. Again at the very top, confirm your entity's system award management registration information. Make sure your SAM is current. Register in grants.gov, find the funding opportunity, and access the application package. You should not wait until the last day to register in grants.gov. You can register now, as you're listening. Submit the application for the federal assistance standard form (SF)-424, and the Disclosure of Lobbying Activities form (SF-LLL) and grants.gov. Receive an email notification to complete your application in JustGrants. That will definitely be the trigger after

you load both the (SF)-424 and the (SF-LLL) in grants.gov. And then lastly, submit your full application in JustGrants. Again, we have a link. The DOJ application submission checklist is just another resource and gentle reminder as you make your way through this grant process.

So now the content of the application submission. So there are critical application elements: the federal assistance standard form, (SF)-424, the proposal abstract, concise version of what you're going to do, the proposal narrative, your 20-page limit for the entire proposal, your budget worksheet, and budget narrative. There is a web-based form that is used, we call it budget detail worksheet, and it can be used to fill in the numbers and amounts as well as descriptions for the different pieces and segments of your budget. An MOU with the correctional agency, we went over that in detail. Then the budget and associated documentation. If applicable, you must provide your indirect cost rate agreement. There's a financial management and system of internal controls questionnaire that must be completed. And if applicable, there's a disclosure of process related to executive compensation.

Additional application components, if applicable, the tribal authorizing resolution, your research and evaluation and dependence and integrity statement, request and justification for employee compensation waiver, if applicable. Then there's disclosures and assurances. Again, during the grants.gov process, the Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, which is the SF-LLL form, the applicant disclosure of duplication in cost items, DOJ certified standard assurances, DOJ certifications regarding lobbying, debarment, suspension, and other responsibility matters as well as the drug free workplace requirements. And there's the applicant disclosure and justification, if in fact you, as an entity, have been designated as a high-risk grantee on previous grants by the DOJ.

So now we're going to talk about the review information of your entire proposal. So the merit review criteria and the weight are as such: The description of the issue weighs in at 15%. The project design and implementation is the bulk of the weight, at 35%. Capabilities and competencies that are described within your proposal come in at 30%. Your plan for collecting the data required for the solicitation performance measures are weighted at 10% and your overall budget comes in at 10%. Other important considerations for the Bureau of Justice Assistance include geographic diversity, strategic priorities, available funding, past performance of grantees, if you are one, and the extent to which the budget worksheet and budget narrative, which are all web-based forms, accurately explain project costs that are reasonable, necessary, and otherwise allowable under federal law and applicable federal cost principles.

Again, JustGrants offers a streamlined end-to-end process, enabling applicants and grantees to move seamlessly through the full grant management lifecycle.

JustGrants gives applicants and award recipients new ways to manage their own entity information and that of users in the system.

So again, JustGrants support. We have a few links to different particular training on application mechanics, how to submit an actual application. There's a webinar for that. We also have a training on application submission, step-by-step guide with videos. We have an archive of training videos to show applicants how to use JustGrants, including navigating the user experience, what steps/actions applicants need to take prior to applying for funding, identifying the key roles in the application process, meaning the entity administration, the application submitter, submitting an application. There is training videos and archive webinars on managing the grants as well as performance and financial reporting.

Additional JustGrants supports are available at [justicegrants.usdoj.gov](https://justicegrants.usdoj.gov). We provide a list of frequently asked questions so you can find answers to frequently asked questions regarding JustGrants and the automated standard application for payment, which is known as ASAP. User support, which is access self-service, topic specific and technical support options for assistance in using JustGrants systems. There's a link to resources guides, financial and administrative resources for grant management, funding opportunities, and, of course, ASAP training and resources. Also available on [justicegrants.usdoj.gov](https://justicegrants.usdoj.gov) are news and updates. So, you can sign up and receive emails from JustGrants on updates from the free grant-making entities within the Department of Justice that include the COPS Office, the Office of Justice Programs, and the Office of Violence Against Women.

We have a list of recommended resources. Again, the OJP Funding Resource Center, the DOJ Grants Financial Guide, the OJP Grants Financial Management and Grant Administration Training, the OJP Grant Application Resource Guide, the National Reentry Resource Center, as well as the National Institute of Justice's [CrimeSolutions.gov](https://www.crimesolutions.gov).

Just sharing some important contacts from [grants.gov](https://grants.gov) as well as JustGrants, as well as the National Criminal Justice Reference Services. Alright, Second Chance Act solicitations are available now at [bja.ojp.gov/funding/current](https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/current). Application deadlines vary, so read carefully. Access information on funding webinars, as well as JustGrants application submission resources.

Amanda Nowak: Alright, and that concludes the solicitation webinar. So we want to thank you for your time and attention and we look forward to receiving your applications. Thanks so much everyone.

Andre Bethea: Thank you everyone.