

Proposal Narrative

FY 2025 Justice Assistance Grant – South Carolina

South Carolina’s Justice Assistance Grant Program Narrative information and responses are presented below. Additionally, the *South Carolina State Strategy – Justice Assistance Grant Program Federal Fiscal Years 2024 – 2028* is attached to this application. This program narrative will address individual information elements requested on pages 16-17 of the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program FY 2025 State Solicitation (OMB No.1121-0329). Readers may be directed to specific page numbers or sections of the *South Carolina State Strategy* which address the elements requested under the solicitation subsection titled Proposal Narrative 1-3.

1. Description of the Issue

What critical issue or problem is the applicant proposing to address with this project? Identify the issues the state intends to address with JAG funds, to include gaps in the state’s needed resources for criminal justice purposes. Include discussion of any issues that arose in administering previous fiscal years’ JAG awards and provide a strategy for how funding priorities will address these issues.

These priorities are based on the *South Carolina State Strategy – Justice Assistance Grant Program Federal Fiscal Years 2024 – 2028*, which offers an analysis of the criminal justice challenges facing South Carolina (pages 3) and the resource needs (pages 15-17).

LAW ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS

Priority Efforts: Narcotics, Gangs, Violent Crime Enforcement, Training, Equipment, and Forensic Laboratory Training and Equipment

Description of Programs:

- Narcotics/Gangs/Violent Crime Enforcement: The primary goal of this program is to increase enforcement efforts through the creation of multijurisdictional task forces and hire specialized investigators to improve the effectiveness in strategies to combat violent crime, gang activity, and drug use.
- Law Enforcement Training/Equipment: The primary goal of this program is to fund law enforcement-based programs, training, and the purchase of critically needed equipment.
- Forensic Laboratory Training/Equipment: The purpose of this program is to increase officer training and provide funding to purchase the forensic tools needed to investigate and prosecute specialized crimes, such as domestic violence, gang violence, and drug offenses.

PROSECUTION AND COURTS PROGRAMS

Priority Efforts: Specialty Courts, Gun/Violent Crime/Gang Prosecution, and Court Technologies

Description of Programs:

- Specialty Courts: The primary goal of this program is to create specialty courts that assist with the prosecution and disposition of specialized crime cases (e.g., drug and violent crime, domestic violence, etc.).
- Gun, Violent Crime, and Gang Prosecution: The goal of this program is to provide support to jurisdictions to assist with the prosecution of gun-related crime, violent crime, and gang-related crime.

- Court Technologies: The primary goal of this program is to increase the effectiveness and availability of technology in courtrooms to decrease the time spent processing cases and to make information easily accessible to juries.

MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS AND RELATED LAW ENFORCEMENT/CORRECTIONS PROGRAMS

Priority Efforts: Officer Wellness and Suicide Prevention and Crisis Intervention Teams

Description of Programs:

- Officer Wellness/Suicide Prevention: The purpose of this program is to improve delivery of and access to mental health and wellness services for law enforcement and detention officers.
- Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT): The goal of this program is to support the creation of CITs that will respond more effectively to crisis calls and to allow for the growth and funding of additional specialized training.

B. Project Design and Implementation

How will the proposed project address the need identified and address the purpose of the NOFO? Describe the state's process for engaging stakeholders from across the justice continuum and how that input informs priorities. This should include a description of how local communities are engaged in the planning process, how state and local planning efforts are coordinated, and the challenges faced in coordination. Identify the stakeholders representing each statutory JAG program area who are participating in the strategic planning process. Describe how JAG funds will be coordinated with state and related justice funds. Provide the proposed subaward process and timeline and a description of the programs to be funded over the 4-year grant period.

Implementation of the Edward J. Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program in South Carolina has been a cooperative effort among federal, state, and local agencies working to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system. A wide array of programs and projects have been initiated through the Byrne program and subsequently supported by state or local monies once grant funding was no longer available. Resources provided by the JAG funds have been successful in addressing gaps in services in state and local law enforcement jurisdictions, as well as addressing criminal justice records improvement, court system efficiency, and crime prevention.

Data collection and analysis is gathered by this office from the criminal justice community throughout the year. State and local criminal justice agencies, drug treatment and education/prevention agencies are contacted, such as the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED); the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC); the South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services; the South Carolina Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities' Office of Substance Use Services; the South Carolina Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities' Office of Mental Health ; the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice; the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy; the South Carolina Attorney General's Office (SCAG); and the South Carolina Commission on Indigent Defense. In addition, contacts are made with several of the state's sheriffs, chiefs of police, and solicitors, as well as organizations including the S.C. Law Enforcement Officers Association, the South Carolina Police Chiefs Association, and the South Carolina Sheriffs' Association. Additional contacts and collaborative efforts are discussed on

pages 4-6 of the *South Carolina State Strategy – Justice Assistance Grant Program Federal Fiscal Years 2024 – 2028*.

Please refer to the *South Carolina State Strategy – Justice Assistance Grant Program Federal Fiscal Years 2024 – 2028* section titled “Data and Analysis” (pages 8-15) for detailed data regarding the state’s key criminal justice issues.

As part of their state Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) reporting, State Administering Agencies (SAAs) are responsible for collecting DCRA data on a quarterly basis from state and local entities and submitting that data to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). Beginning October 1, 2019, the South Carolina Department of Public Safety (SCDPS), serving as the SAA, began collecting and reporting information on in-custody deaths in South Carolina. As a prerequisite to receiving JAG funding, SCDPS must submit a plan for DCRA data collection and reporting in accordance with Public Law 113-242 as part of its solicitation response. The SCDPS DCRA Implementation Plan was provided with the FY23 Justice Assistance Grant application. This plan was submitted and approved in August 2023.

SCDPS plans to utilize JAG funds to support DCRA compliance, including compiling and reporting DCRA data. JAG funds will provide a portion of salary and fringe benefits for the Statistical Analysis and Research Section (SARS). SARS is responsible for collecting, reviewing, validating and reporting DCRA data in South Carolina. SARS also conducts outreach and engagement with state and local agencies, to include correctional facilities, state and local law enforcement and county coroner’s offices to build cooperation and understanding of DCRA requirements. SARS also drafts South Carolina’s approved DCRA Implementation Plan and prepares updates as required.

Other state issues, such as juvenile justice, are also considered in the planning effort. The SCDPS, OHSJP staff serves the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council (the State Advisory Group established under the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act) and takes into account its perspective when recommending JAG subawards that involve juvenile justice issues or services. Additionally, data collection and input are continuously gathered on newer funding priorities concerning law enforcement, prosecution and courts, drug treatment and enforcement, and mental health issues in South Carolina.

Input is also gathered by staff throughout the grant year in face-to-face meetings with front line officers and command staff as part of our on-site monitoring program. SAA staff travel to JAG sites, inspect grant-funded equipment, and interview funded staff and project directors to gather information on current and future criminal justice priorities. This information is documented in field reports and is supplemented with information from progress reports submitted by subgrantees.

Another crucial source for our data collection and analysis effort is the South Carolina Incident-Based Reporting System (SCIBRS) that is managed by SLED. SCIBRS offers far more detail regarding crime incidents than would a summary reporting system, meaning that this data provides a rich foundation from which to draw conclusions and make decisions. Details include information about the offense, offender, arrestee, victim, and stolen property.

It is important to note that this strategic planning process and prioritization does not limit proposals or applicants except to the federal restrictions. That is, in general, proposals in each annual funding cycle will be eligible for submission and will be reviewed as long as they are within federal program parameters. It is viewed as better to allow for the development and submission

of non-priority proposals (which may be innovative or address an overlooked critical need) than to prohibit them.

There are some exceptions to the policy of accepting for review and recommendation proposals which are outside strategic priorities. Certain eligibility conventions have been adopted by either the SCDPS, OHSJP or the SCPSCC. For example, it is a longstanding internal policy of the SAA not to recommend or fund requests from law enforcement agencies for undercover buy-money. The reasons for these policy decisions are not germane, but these restrictions have served the program well over the years.

The SCPSCC also can and does impose restrictions on the types of JAG subgrant funding it will approve. This ten member Council was created by statute to oversee grant programs administered by the SCDPS, OHSJP. Therefore, they also contribute to the strategic planning process by limiting approval in some categories of applications (e.g., the Council views JAG funds as primarily intended for direct law enforcement, prosecution, corrections, and public safety applications and has gone on record as refusing to support applications for public defender initiatives).

A final point of discussion in this section is how JAG funds are coordinated with state funding and other federal funding streams. Staff will become aware of any new state programs which have the potential to complement or compete with programs funded under JAG. For example, a dedicated source of body camera funding was established in 2015 through the state's "Body-Worn Cameras (BWC) Fund" in support of BWCs, storage, and maintenance for state and local law enforcement agencies, the Attorney General's Office, solicitors' offices, and public defenders' offices in South Carolina. Pursuant to the SC Code of Laws, §23-1-240, the SCPSCC has been given

oversight of the funding and disbursement of the BWC Fund. To this end, the OHSJP has coordinated its efforts to avoid the duplication of resources among programs.

South Carolina's executive branch operates under a cabinet form of government, thus most of the major criminal justice agencies (e.g., SCDC, SCDPPPS, SCDPS, SLED, etc.) are represented on the Governor's cabinet. The directors of these agencies physically convene on a regular basis to discuss common problems and endeavors. Similarly, staff under all these agencies collaborate through a number of councils or organizations (e.g., the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council, the Law Enforcement Training Council, the U.S. Attorney Law Enforcement Coordinating Council, the SCPSCC, the Impaired Driving Prevention Council, the Governor's Domestic Violence Task Force, etc.). This depth of purposeful institutional communication mitigates against uncoordinated or duplicative projects.

The other advantage that the Criminal Justice Programs office enjoys is that most criminal and juvenile justice-related federal funding streams are managed by the SCDPS, OHSJP. With the exception of Homeland Security funding (administered by SLED) and Victims Services grants (administered by SCAG), virtually all justice-related formula grants from USDOJ's Office of Justice Programs flow through the SCDPS, OHSJP. Because these funding streams are under the management of one office, staff on various programs work very closely together and routinely share funding recommendations and funding policy position information to avoid overlap, duplication, and waste. This close communication is also utilized to coordinate and complement funding patterns. For example, The South Carolina General Assembly had designated non-recurring state funds for the purpose of providing financial assistance to local units of government for the purchase of body armor for its law enforcement officers. Funds paid up to

100 percent of allowable vests, taxes, and shipping purchases for vests used in the ordinary course of police duty. The Criminal Justice Programs section of the OHSJP was able to coordinate JAG funding with this state funding, known as the Body Armor Assistance Grant (BAAG) Program. These funding streams were strategically deployed to maximize funding for vests and to further coordinate with federal funding, like the Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership Program, through the Office of Justice Program's Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Please also refer to the *South Carolina State Strategy – Justice Assistance Grant Program Federal Fiscal Years 2024 – 2028* section titled “Strategic Plan Development” (pages 2-4) and subtitled section “Other Coordinating Efforts” (pages 4-6).

Effective July 1, 2021, the administration of state funds for School Resource Officers (SROs) transferred from the South Carolina Department of Education to the South Carolina Department of Public Safety. The purpose of the SRO Program is to fund full-time certified law enforcement officers to serve as SROs in schools that otherwise would lack the adequate resources to hire their own SROs. As of the 2025-2026 fiscal year, the SRO Program has awarded funds to provide salary/fringe, training, and equipment for 505 state-funded SRO positions.

In summary, the strategic planning process utilized in South Carolina allows appropriate and effective projects to emerge and be considered by staff and the SCPSCC. Through communication with local agencies, the expansion and replication of successful projects, and the implementation of innovative concepts, the OHSJP will continue to administer funding to worthwhile projects that further the reduction of crime in South Carolina.

The subgrant award process and timeline.

The notification of the availability of grant funds is made by electronic notification announcing

the annual Criminal Justice Programs (CJP) Grant Solicitation Workshop. The notification is sent to all relevant state agencies, all city and town mayors or administrators, county administrators, police chiefs, sheriffs, solicitors, local community non-profits, and those who have requested to be notified of availability of funds. The announcement and any attachments are also posted on the OHSJP webpage. The CJP Grant Solicitation Workshop is conducted to provide potential applicants with information about the JAG Program. The workshop is held in February to allow time for applicants to complete applications before the April deadline. Each in-person workshop participant is provided with an agenda, staff contact list, copies of presentation slides, and a QR code to complete a workshop evaluation survey. The JAG Application Solicitation, a list of Funding Priorities, sample programmatic application pages, application instructions, sample financial pages, and all other resource materials are also posted on the OHSJP webpage. The application due date is traditionally early in the month of April.

The application review and approval process begins with the receipt of the applications via the OHJSP's grant management system, no later than 5:00 p.m. on the designated due date. All applications are date/time recorded by the system as soon as they are received. CJP staff review all applications and use uniform criteria by which to assess each application. Once applications are reviewed and staffed, a book of completed summaries and recommendations is sent to the SC Public Safety Coordinating Council (SCPSCC), the legislatively-mandated council that oversees grant programs administered by the OHSJP. The SCPSCC members vote to approve or disapprove recommendations and have the final determination of which applications are funded.

The standard JAG award timeline is:

January – Issue notice of statewide workshop and solicitation

February– Conduct statewide solicitation workshops and open application portal

April – JAG application period closes

April-May – Research and staff applications

June-August - Draft summaries and recommendations book

September – Present recommendations to the SCPSCC; prepare award/denial letters

September/October – Issue grant awards and denial letters

October – JAG subgrants commence for a 12-month grant period

Description of the programs to be funded over the four-year grant period.

Please refer to the *South Carolina State Strategy – Justice Assistance Grant Program Federal Fiscal Years 2024– 2028*, which discusses priority programs that South Carolina plans to continue funding during the grant period (pages 6-8).

C. Capabilities and Competencies

Describe the applicant’s capacity to deliver the proposed project and meet the requirements of the award, including collecting and reporting the required performance measure data. Who will be responsible for this task, and how will the applicant collect the data? Describe the SAA’s capacity for administering the JAG award and subawards during the four year project period, to include required subrecipient monitoring. Describe any additional strategic planning and coordination efforts in which the state participates with other criminal/juvenile justice agencies in the state. Please provide an overview of any evidence-informed programs that have been implemented successfully and how those programs might inform implementation of strategic plan priorities.

The OHSJP has extensive experience in the collection and submittal of subgrant data to federal funding agencies. Beginning with the JAG funding under the ARRA (Stimulus) legislation, the BJA added quarterly reporting requirements via the Performance Measurement Tool (PMT). Staff collect this data by requiring subgrantees to enter the data into the PMT for their projects on a quarterly basis. In addition to the quarterly PMT data, subgrantees are required to submit semi-annual progress reports to the OHSJP on each project. Staff has met and will continue to meet all reporting requirements by submitting data through the PMT to Just Grants on a quarterly and semi-annual basis. Some of this information is addressed above in our discussion of the strategic planning process. Please also refer to the *South Carolina State Strategy – Justice Assistance Grant Program Federal Fiscal Years 2024 – 2028* subtitled section “Other Coordination Efforts” (pages 4-6). South Carolina’s JAG subgrant applications which are evidence-based will be given priority toward funding. South Carolina recognizes that the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) and the entirety of the USDOJ Office of Justice Programs strongly encourage states to prioritize the funding of evidence-based projects. We concur with BJA that programs and practices can be fairly termed evidence-based when their effectiveness has been demonstrated by causal evidence, generally obtained through one or more outcome evaluations.

The OHSJP has long used criminal justice program research to both support its funding recommendations to our grants governing body, and to help sustain its recommendations not to fund projects based on their lack of effectiveness in the literature. As an example, we support and have supported for two decades the deployment of multijurisdictional task forces to address drug and violent crime. Task forces have been well documented over many years and have conclusively shown that they result in a number of superior outcomes. Among these are a greater

number of arrests in which the drug violators are mid- or upper-level management, greater seizures of drug quantities, larger asset forfeitures, and a greater probability of dismantling violent crime and drug networks as compared to more isolated, non-multijurisdictional approaches.

However, not all project-funding recommendations under the JAG program are, or should be, strictly evidence-based in the classical sense. Some awards seek to remediate serious or even emergency situations in which agencies, typically small police departments, are desperately in need of specific resources. Such resources would include exigent circumstances in which equipment can have a direct and immediate impact on officer safety or the safety of the public. One example of this is bulletproof vests. A vest is clearly a critical piece of equipment to ensure that officers are sufficiently protected with in-date, well-fitting vests of a proper threat level. Some departments are not able, for a variety of fiscal reasons, to always properly equip their officers. Consequently, it has been a priority of the SCDPS, OHSJP to recommend funding (from JAG and other grant sources) to see that these officers are in fact provided with this critical life-saving equipment. Additionally, providing equipment essential to the safe and fundamental operation of law enforcement, corrections, courts, or community corrections clearly falls under the JAG program purpose areas and is therefore allowable.

Please refer to the *South Carolina State Strategy – Justice Assistance Grant Program Federal Fiscal Years 2024 – 2028* section titled “Data and Analysis” (pages 8-9) for detailed information regarding the state’s NIBRS implementation.

In summary, the State Administrative Agency (SAA) embraces and supports funding evidence-based projects with JAG awards and takes an equally strong position toward not funding projects

for which research has demonstrated ineffectiveness. However, there is a middle ground of promising projects, such as projects that are not evidence-based because they are innovative, and projects that are funded based on need. We believe this to be a fair and balanced approach consistent with the spirit and intent of federal legislation.