

Proposal Narrative

FY 2026 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 11-12 of the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program FY 2026 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 Need

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

Narcotics/Gangs/Violent Crime Enforcement: 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: To fund law enforcement-based programs, training, and the purchase of critically needed equipment.

Forensic Laboratory Training/Equipment: To increase officer training and provide funding to purchase the forensic tools needed to investigate and successfully prosecute drug and violent crimes.

PROSECUTION AND COURTS PROGRAMS: **Priority Efforts:** Specialty Courts, Gun/Violent Crime/Gang Prosecution, and Court Technologies

Specialty Courts: 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: To provide support to jurisdictions to assist with the prosecution of gun-related crime, violent crime, and gang-related crime.

Court Technologies: 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

Officer Wellness/Suicide Prevention: To improve delivery of and access to mental health and wellness services for law enforcement and detention officers.

Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT): 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.

2. Project Design and Implementation

Implementation of the Edward 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; and, the South Carolina Attorney General's Office (SCAG). Contacts are also made with several of the state's sheriffs, chiefs of police, solicitors, and organizations including the S.C. Law Enforcement Officers Association, the South Carolina Police Chiefs Association, and the South Carolina Sheriffs' Association. Additional 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.

State Administering Agencies (SAAs) are also 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.

It is important to note that this strategic planning process and prioritization does not limit proposals or applicants except to the federal restrictions. 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 SC Public Safety Coordinating Council (SCPSCC). The SCPSCC is the legislatively-mandated council that oversees grant programs administered by the OHSJP. The SCPSCC also can and does impose restrictions on the types of JAG subgrant funding it will approve. 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).

JAG funds are coordinated with state funding and other federal funding streams when Staff become aware of any new state programs which have the potential to complement or compete with JAG funded programs. 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. 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 with most of the major criminal justice agencies (e.g., SCDC, SCDPPPS, SCDPS, SLED, etc.) being represented on the Governor's cabinet. The directors of these agencies convene on a regular basis to discuss common problems and endeavors. Similarly, staff under all these agencies collaborate through various councils (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, 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.

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).

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. In addition, 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. 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 SCPSCC. 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

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).

3. Capabilities and Competencies

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 support its funding recommendations to our grants governing body, and to sustain its recommendations not to fund projects based on their lack of effectiveness in the literature. For example, for two decades we have supported multijurisdictional task forces to address drug and violent crime. Task forces have conclusively shown their effectiveness through a greater number of arrests of mid- or upper-level

management drug violators, greater seizures of drug quantities, larger asset forfeitures, and a greater probability of dismantling violent crime and drug networks compared to 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 emergency situations in which agencies, typically small police departments, are desperately in need of specific officer safety resources. One example of this is bulletproof vests. A vest is 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 to always properly equip their officers. It has been a priority of the SCDPS, OHSJP to recommend funding to ensure these officers are provided with this critical life-saving equipment.

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.