

LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL COG-21

Criminal Justice Advisory Committee
Policy & Procedures for Grants
FY 2021-22



LRGVDC Public Safety – Criminal Justice Program
301 W. Railroad St.
Weslaco, TX 78596
(956) 682-3481
www.lrgvdc.org

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THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE GRANTS DIVISION AND THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The Office of the Governor's (OOG) Criminal Justice Division (CJD) is the entity responsible for administering and awarding a number of grant programs across the State of Texas. The grant funding assists Texas jurisdictions to improve public safety and support victims of crime by filling system gaps and promoting innovative solutions to common challenges. The LRGVDC is one of twenty-four Councils of Government (COG) in the State of Texas and is the liaison between the OOG and local jurisdictions in the three county regions, which includes the counties of Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy.

POLICIES AUTHORITY

The following policies and procedures will govern the LRGVDC's Criminal Justice Advisory Committee's (CJAC) application review and prioritization process for designated funding sources. In addition, these policies and procedures will govern the operation of LRGVDC's Criminal Justice planning as outlined in the Interlocal Cooperation Agreement between CJD and the LRGVDC. These policies are reviewed annually to align with local, regional and state guidelines.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CJAC)

The CJAC is a volunteer committee comprised of a multi-disciplinary representation of members from the region as per CJD requirements. Members are appointed by the LRGVDC's Executive Committee. The responsibility of the CJAC is to advise the LRGVDC on matters related to criminal justice.

The discipline areas include:

- citizens or parents
- substance abuse prevention
- education, juvenile justice
- law enforcement
- mental health
- non-profit organizations
- prosecution or courts
- victim services
- municipalities/counties

No single group or discipline may constitute more than one-third (1/3) of the CJAC.

FUNDING SOURCES

The CJAC will review and prioritize the following CJD funding sources:

- General Victim Assistance Direct Services Program (VOCA)
- Violence Against Women Justice and Training Program (VAWA)
- Criminal Justice Program (JAG)
- Juvenile Justice and Truancy Prevention Program
- Child Sex Trafficking
- Sexual Assault Forensic Exam Ready Facilities Program

GRANT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

All applicants regardless of funding status must meet ALL the requirements as set forth by the Office of the Governor/Public Safety Office's Criminal Justice Division's Request for Funding Announcement (RFA), no exceptions.

The LRGVDC's Criminal Justice staff and the CJAC shall ensure that the funding recommendations on applications are based on the following factors: the LRGVDC's Criminal Justice Strategic Plan, CJAC Policies, CJD requirements, reasonableness, and cost effectiveness.

MANDATORY GRANT WORKSHOP

All applicants are required to attend one grant workshop sponsored by the LRGVDC's Criminal Justice staff. Representatives can be one of the three grant designated officials, or a knowledgeable employee of the agency that is applying. Applicants who fail to attend a mandatory grant workshop shall be ineligible.

APPLICATIONS

All applications shall be submitted on CJD's online grant management system, egrants.gov.texas.gov. All submission deadlines are determined by the Office of the Governor/Public Safety Office's Criminal Justice Division.

EQUIPMENT ONLY FUNDING REQUESTS

Applicants requesting funding for equipment only and no programmatic services, will be considered a biennium only applicant.

INELIGIBLE APPLICATIONS

Duplicate applications submitted for more than one COG administered CJD funding source will be considered under one funding source only. Applicants will be responsible for deciding which funding source they will apply under.

The CJAC reserves the right to deny recommendation for funding on any application, ineligible activity or line item that is not permitted under the funding source. LRGVDC staff will notify the Criminal Justice Division of such decisions.

LRGVDC's CRIMINAL JUSTICE REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

All eligible applications must address one or more of the priorities outlined in the regional strategic plan. The plan is available on the LRGVDC's website, www.lrgvdc.org.

The regional strategic plan describes the following:

- how local communities are engaged in the planning process
- how the data is used to support the plan
- stakeholders participating in the planning process
- gaps in resources for criminal justice needs
- criminal justice priorities identified during the planning process
- how the plan will be used by the CJAC during the prioritization process

PRIORITIZATION PROCESS

CJAC Members will be given a minimum of two-weeks to review and score applications. Members will use a scoring instrument to record application scoring. Only COG staff will compute scores. The scoring instrument is reviewed annually and is updated as needed to reflect local, state, and federal guidelines. Once the applications are tabulated, the CJAC will hold a prioritization meeting to review rankings and determine budget allocations.

- **Tie Breaking Procedures**

The highest and lowest score will be removed and recalculated to obtain the new aggregated score and will not affect the overall rankings of all the other applicants.

Depending on ongoing health and safety factors, the prioritization meeting will be either online, or in person. Applicants will be notified of the prioritization meeting date and platform, but attendance is not mandatory.

The CJAC reserves the right to recommend an amount less than the requested amount based on the budget cost effectiveness, reasonableness or previous performance under all funding sources.

COG staff will submit the CJAC's recommended prioritization list for all the funding categories to the LRGVDC Board of Directors to review and approve. The LRGVDC Board of Directors reserves the right to endorse or disallow the CJAC's recommendations. Once approved, the COG will submit the prioritization list of grant projects to CJD. All projects are conditionally approved until CJD makes the final determination.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The COG shall ensure that members of the COG's governing body, the CJAC, and COG staff abstain from scoring and voting on any grant application, other than a grant application submitted by a COG, during the prioritization process if the member or an individual related to the member within the third degree by consanguinity or within the second degree by affinity:

- is employed by the applicant agency and works for the unit or division that would administer the grant, if awarded;
- serves on any governing board that oversees the unit or division that would administer the grant, if awarded; or
- owns or controls any interest in a business entity or other non-governmental organization that benefits, directly or indirectly, from activities with the applicant agency; or
- receives any funds from the applicant agency as a result of the grant, if awarded; or
- receives any funds, or a substantial amount of tangible goods, or services, from the applicant agency as a result of the grant, if awarded.

If a CJAC member has a conflict of interest regarding a particular grant application, the member must abstain from voting, commenting, or otherwise influencing the prioritization process for that application.

If any applicant, CJAC member, COG personnel or other individual has reason to believe that favoritism or inappropriate actions occurred during the scoring or prioritization of PSO/CJD projects, the COG shall ensure that concerns are shared with PSO/CJD as soon as possible.

NOTIFICATION OF PRIORITIZATION RESULTS

The COG shall notify all applicants of the approved priorities within fourteen (14) calendar days of the LRGVDC's Board of Directors' approval.

LOCAL APPEALS PROCESS

Please note that appeals cannot be based on areas of discretion in the CJAC scoring criteria. An applicant may appeal based on the following:

- Mathematical error (i.e. the score on any selection criteria is arrived at incorrectly by COG staff due to human or computer error)

The appeal must be submitted in writing to the LRGVDC Board of Directors Chair within ten (10) business working days from the date of the notification of prioritization results. All appeals must include the specific alleged procedural violation(s).

An applicant must base their appeal upon a verifiable error made during the prioritization of the review process and the applicant must show that the error actually caused the denial of the application (or a portion of the application). The applicant must submit written documentation supporting the appeal.

Appeals made regarding a CJAC decision will be handled by the COG only. If an applicant appeals to CJD, they will be requested to go back to their COG for resolution. The responsibility and decision to consider initially filed appeals lies solely with the LRGVDC Board of Directors. CJD does not accept or provide an appeals process.

The LRGVDC Board of Directors may take one of the following actions:

- Concur with the appeal and make the appropriate adjustments to the applicant's scores.
- Disagree with the appeal and provide the basis for rejecting the appeal to the applicant.

FINAL REVIEW BY CJD

The COG shall submit the priority list of applications to the Office of the Governor's Criminal Justice Division. If corrections are deemed necessary, CJD will notify grantees directly. Grantees will be expected to submit the corrections to CJD. All funding decisions made by the Criminal Justice Division are final. No appeals will be accepted by the Criminal Justice Division regarding their funding decisions.