



Report to CDVSA Board of Directors

Funding Recommendations for FY20-22 Enhanced Services for Victims of Crime Grant Program – VOCA funding only

January 23, 2020

CDVSA's Enhanced Services for Victims of Crime solicitation and funding process:

On October 25, 2019 CDVSA issued a new Request for Proposals (RFP) titled, **Enhanced Services for Victims of Crime**. The purpose of the **Enhanced Services for Victims of Crime** grant program is to provide funding to community, municipal or tribal organizations to serve victims of crime in Alaska. Funding is from CDVSA's Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) federal formula funding. VOCA funding provides specific services to all victims of crime including those who are underserved populations, who have experienced interpersonal violence, sexual assault, child abuse, child sexual abuse, and other crimes.

The intent of this RFP is to provide funding to *enhance* funding for programs that already exist, giving additional funding to increase, improve and support programming that provides services to victims of crime in three primary areas of service:

- 1) Legal Assistance Services;
- 2) Mental Health counseling for children and youth through 18 year of age who are direct victims of violence or have witnessed violent crimes;
- 3) Child Advocacy Center Services.

These three identified areas of service that will be funded through this RFP are priority areas that CDVSA has not specifically funded in the past. We are particularly excited to be able to fund improved services to children impacted by violence through funding for mental health services and child advocacy centers. In addition, legal assistance is a critical service that most victims of crime need and often do not have access to in a timely manner, if at all. Applicants were only allowed to apply for one of the three Priority Categories.

Enhanced Services applications were due to CDVSA by COB December 6, 2019. A total of nineteen proposals were received – 3 for legal services; 7 for mental health services; and 9 for child advocacy center services for a total of 19 proposals. The first step in the review process was for the staff to read each proposal to ensure they met minimum qualifications for review. In addition, staff went through each proposal's budget to identify if all expenditures were



allowable – allowability of budget requests looked for VOCA allowability, as well as RFP funding allowability. The RFP provided clear funding limitations for each of the three priority categories: Legal Assistance Services and Mental Health Counseling were limited to personnel costs of direct service providers associated with providing the identified services; funding for CACs was limited to personnel costs of direct service providers, training of direct service providers; and equipment and furniture to facilitate the delivery of direct services.

This RFP supports funding for 5-months of FY20, plus two continuation years (FY21 and FY22). Total available funds to be distributed in response to this RFP are approximately \$7.5 million, approximately \$1.45 million in FY2020 and \$3.0 million each in FY21 and FY22.

A copy of the Request for Proposals is available at the state's Online Public Notice site: <https://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/Notices/View.aspx?id=195902>.

Proposal Evaluation Committees (PEC):

Two Proposal Evaluation Committees (PEC) were held to review the 19 proposals. PEC #1 was held January 14, 2020; PEC members were Sharon Fleming, OCS, Carol Graham, OPA, and Michelle Demmert, CCTHITA (Tlingit & Haida). This PEC reviewed 9 applications for Child Advocacy Center Services.

PEC #2 was held January 16-17, 2020; PEC members were Pat Sidmore, Public Member, Charlotte Rand, DOL, and Allison Gottesman, DJJ. This PEC reviewed 10 applications for Legal Advocacy Services (3) and Mental Health Services for children and youth (7).

Each PEC member received electronic copies of each application for their review; they read and scored applications individually prior to the PEC meeting. PEC members were instructed to use median scoring (meaning if a question is worth 10 points, a median score will be 5, indicating the response to the questions met all requirements. If a response provides more information, detail or creativity, additional points can be added up to 10. If the response is lacking in its content and clarity, points can be deducted down to 0). Median scoring provides a more nuanced and accurate reflection of the quality of each response.

Application scores were worth a total of 240 points; using median scoring a score of 120 total points indicated that everything requested was provided. Three (3) applicants failed to meet the median score: Maniilaq Association (111.17); Copper River Basin (104.50); and Bartlett Regional Hospital (82.67). This did not disqualify the applicants from receiving funds, but scores were a consideration in final recommendations.



Cumulative Scores for PEC #1 (Child Advocacy Centers) are:

STEVIE'S PLACE	143.50
TUNDRA WOMEN'S COALITION	137.00
PROVIDENCE ALASKA MEDICAL CENTER	135.00
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICE S.A.F.E	129.33
SOUTH PENINSULA HAVEN HOUSE	125.50
BRISTOL BAY AREA HEALTH CORPORATION	123.33
THE CHILDREN'S PLACE	123.33
MANIILAQ ASSOCIATION	111.17
COPPER RIVER BASIN	104.50

Cumulative Scores for PEC #2 (Legal Advocacy (3) and Mental Health Services (7)) are:

ALASKA NETWORK ON DV/SA	162.50
AIDING WOMEN IN ABUSE AND RAPE EMERGENCIES	139.67
INTERIOR ALASKA CENTER FOR NON-VIOLENT LIVING	132.50
ANCHORAGE COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES	176.67
VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA ALASKA	166.67
WOMEN IN SAFE HOMES	145.00
LEESHORE CENTER	141.83
STANDING TOGETHER AGAINST RAPE	134.00
TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE	123.83
BARTLETT REGIONAL HOSPITAL	82.67

PEC Recommendations:

Following the scoring for each PEC, members were asked for their recommendations related to whether to fund or not fund; funding amounts; special conditions related to funding; or any general recommendations for each proposal or general recommendations of items that many applicants had difficulty with, and the PEC wanted to give guidance moving forward.



PEC #1 (Child Advocacy Centers):

Following the final scoring and discussion, the PEC members unanimously recommended some level of funding for each applicant – even the two that did not reach the 120-point threshold. The belief was that the service enhancement for each of the Child Advocacy Centers applying for funding would address significant needs to meet the growing demand for these critical services. CACs have been flat funded for many years, yet the need for services has grown, including the need to keep CAC staff trained and qualified to provide quality services. Most CACs run very barebone programs, often without the appropriate equipment and staffing levels. While the PEC did not make specific funding recommendations, they recognized that the request for funding in FY20 exceeded the amount identified as available for the first 5-months.

Knowing that staff would need to make recommended cuts to the CAC requests, the PEC suggested that Copper River Basin, with a score of 104.50 and Maniilaq Association, with a score of 111.17 receive a proportional decrease based on their lower application scores. The PEC recommended any cuts to Maniilaq should come from their furniture line item rather than direct services or training. In addition, they suggested that if additional reductions in award amounts were needed that a reduction be made to Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation who asked for significantly more funds than any other applicant – 46% higher than the next highest requested amount – and felt that BBAHC did not identify needs significant enough to justify such a large amount of the available and limited funding. These suggestions were considered when staff recommendations were made.

PEC #2 (Legal Advocacy Services and Mental Health Services for Youth):

Following the final scoring and discussion, the PEC members unanimously recommended that all Legal Advocacy and Mental Health applicants receive funding except for Bartlett Regional Hospital (BRH). The application submitted by BRH was deemed non-responsive due to their total score of 82.7 out of 240 overall points. The PEC comments included, "Not well written, barebones application, lack of commitment to something worthy of public funding, were not clear that services were specifically for victims of crime nor were they clear that the services would be for children and youth through 18 years."

The application from Standing Together Against Rape (STAR), raised questions that need clarification and additional information before staff makes FY2020 funding available, based on the final funding recommendation. While the PEC supports some level of funding for STAR due to the identified need for services to youth victims of crime ages 16-18, there was apprehension about the focus on how to fund services. The questions that need clarification are related to



the proposed contract with Full Spectrum, a private agency providing therapeutic services to the identified population. The concerns with the application were related to the payment process of billing Medicaid or other insurance and then using CDVSA funds to increase payment for services to fully reimburse the provider. While the low Medicaid reimbursement rates is a very real issue and limits the number of available providers who can accept only Medicaid payments, the PEC felt the application was too focused on invoicing, reimbursement, earned revenue and making Full Spectrum a sustainable agency. The application responses offered limited discussion about services to child and youth victims of crime and the expected outcomes for the individuals receiving services. The PEC also indicated concern about the focus on medication management vs. counseling/therapeutic interventions. The PEC requested CDVSA reach out for clarification before any funding decisions/awards are finalized. The PEC suggested that STAR could/should also access mental health services for their youth clients from Anchorage Community Mental Health Services and Volunteers of America, both located in Anchorage and both recommended for funding through this RFP.

PEC #2 was impressed with applications from Anchorage Mental Health Services, Volunteers of America (VOA) and Women in Safe Homes (WISH), indicating they felt these programs could use additional funding to fully carry out their planned activities, and would support additional funding to ACMHA, VOA and WISH, if available. Staff recommended increases of 20% for each of these agencies, in addition to The LeeShore Center, who also requested a small amount of funds.

Both PECs provided a list of general comments indicating areas where many applicants struggled or could have provided more robust and solid information. Those recommendations are:

- Most applicants did not fully respond to Q. 1 by not discussing their level of training, expertise and experience providing trauma-informed services to victims of crime – they appeared to assume we “knew” they were well-versed in trauma informed services;
- Most proposals lacked outreach and collaboration with Alaska Native tribes in their service area. While some included Native health organizations, there was a lack of tribal partnerships, MOUs with tribes and limited discussion regarding the need to build better tribal partnerships. Knowing that Alaska rates of child abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault are highest among our Alaska Native people, it is important that all providers engage in dialogue with tribes in their service area;
- A reminder when agencies are contracting for direct services to a third party, a copy of the contract, with specific deliverables, needs to be provided once an award is made;



- Agencies should increase outreach and service to outlying communities that are identified as part of the agency's service area—in most cases, the amount of service available to outlying communities appeared to be limited.
- Agencies should be more creative in finding ways to partner with other service providers and to engage in better informed outreach and services;
- A general feeling that Memorandums of Agreement (MOA) and letters of commitment need to be more specific to the relationship and the role of each partner. They need to be considered a living, breathing document that should be revisited annually, not just be written to meet a grant application requirement;
- In discussing outreach and informing underserved populations about available services (Q. 8), applicants did not include discussion of agency policies and practices regarding access (language, disabilities), how they are training staff regarding reaching and serving these populations, and their specific needs—more consideration should be given to better prepare staff and the agency to serve these identified underserved populations;
- Need more detailed emphasis on how agencies are using data and outcomes to measure levels of change and to improve programming and policies including the need to use (public domain) validated evaluation tools to increase valid measurement of change;
- It is recommended that CDVSA work with the Violent Crimes Compensation Board (VCCB) to provide grantees with training on the rules, regulations and processes for victims to obtain crime compensation benefits—many of the applicants have never engaged with VCCB;
- Many applicants need to develop more comprehensive and creative plans for recruitment, training, security and confidentiality regarding the use of volunteers within their agencies and programs;
- Few applications discussed their confidentiality plans and policies—this is a critical issue and should have been more prominent in each application;
- In future grant applications/proposals, writers should remember to write as if the reader does not know anything about their agency, community or programming—competitive grants require that PEC members only score the information provided in the “4 corners of the application.” If a proposal is written as if the reader already knows the agency and its programs, there will be questions and reduced scores because the information was not included in the proposal. All PEC members were not intimately familiar with each applicant agency or community.



Funding requests and staff allocation recommendations:

As stated above, both PEC #1 and PEC #2 made qualifying recommendations to fully fund most of the applicants who responded to the Enhanced Services for Victims of Crime RFP. Once PEC recommendations were made, staff worked to determine specific funding allocations, based on PEC scores, comments and recommendations, and available funding for FY2020. Funding allocations were determined based on the funding request from each applicant, the PEC considerations and some internal determinations related to current grantee standing.

Staff funding recommendations for the Child Advocacy Center category includes reductions to three applicants and one deferred grant award; all other applications are recommended at full funding:

- Copper River Basin (35% reduction) due to minimally responsive application and the lowest score among this category (104.50 out of 240);
- Maniilaq Association (15% reduction) due to a lack of detail in their application and lower score (111.17 out of 240);
- Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation (reduced by 31%) due to their exceptionally high dollar request with limited justification why their need was so much higher than other CAC applicants;
- South Peninsula Haven House (no funding in FY20) due to this sub-grantee currently being on “special conditions” with CDVSA due to financial irregularities in FY19. CDVSA proposes deferring a funding decision on this application until FY21, once we have evaluated their current agency status as a CDVSA grantee and improved financial oversight and internal controls. If they are removed from “special conditions” in FY21, CDVSA recommends approving this application for 2-years of funding, as requested.

Staff funding recommendations for the Legal Advocacy Services category includes full funding for all three applicants.

Staff funding recommendations for the Mental Health Services for children and youth category includes:

- Staff and PEC recommend full funding for Tanana Chiefs Conference, recognizing the large geographic area TCC serves and the documented need;
- No funding for Bartlett Regional Hospital due to low score (82.67 out of 240) and non-responsiveness to RFP;
- Anchorage Community MH Services; The LeeShore Center; Volunteers of America (VOA) and Women in Safe Homes (WISH) all received excellent scores, provided



exceptional application responses and requested small amounts of funding – staff and PEC recommend offering each of these programs the opportunity to receive a 20% increase in their request for FY2020;

- Standing Together Against Rape (STAR) is being recommended for funding at 50% of their request due to concerns expressed by the PEC. Funding will be delayed until clarifying documents are received and reviewed by staff.

Copies of two (2) spreadsheets are included in your Board packet. One spreadsheet, FY20 Enhanced VOCA RFP_Amounts and Budget Notes, is a compilation of staff reviews of each application prior to sending to the PEC for review. The second spreadsheet, Enhanced VOCA PEC Workbook, includes final PEC and staff Funding Recommendations (Tab I) and all notes and information from the PECs.

Final Board Action:

A decision was made by a majority vote of the CDVSA Board of Directors that final review and approval of these grant funding awards will be conducted via email, with an electronic vote. This meeting will be considered a Special Board meeting and meet the criteria of the public meeting requirements with information posted on the state's Online Public Notice site, including copies of all materials the CDVSA Board receives to formulate their decisions including this memo, and grant funding spreadsheets with PEC scores, and PEC/Staff funding recommendations. Materials will be posted online and sent to each Board member by COB Thursday, January 23. The packet will also include a voting "ballot" with the options of full approval of PEC/Staff recommendations; recommended decreases and/or increased for one or more applicant agency(ies); or disapproval of funding as recommended by the PEC/Staff.

As discussed at the FY2020 Q. 2 CDVSA Board meeting in December, funding has been set aside in our FY20 budget to adequately fund these new grant awards at the funding levels set in the RFP.

If any Board member has questions or would like additional information, please submit in writing to L. Diane Casto, Executive Director; any additional information provided will be submitted to all Board members and posted online prior to the voting deadline.

All voting will be concluded by COB on Wednesday, January 29, 2020. A final decision to approve funding level recommendations will require a quorum of 5 votes agreeing to the same funding scenario. A final spreadsheet will be posted at the OPN site on Thursday, January 30 with the results of the Board funding decisions.



Alaska's Council on
Domestic Violence
& Sexual Assault

Once the CDVSA Board makes their final recommendations and votes to approve the funding plan for the **Enhanced Services for Victims of Crime** RFP, CDVSA staff will finalize the process of notifying applicants of their pending grant award and preparing Grant Awards, with certifications and conditions, for signature and final award. Our intent is to have all Grant Award documents sent to grantees no later than February 15. As a reminder, year one of this funding covers February 1-June 30, 2020. Continuation applications for funding in FY21 will be submitted in May.

Respectfully submitted by L. Diane Casto, CDVSA Executive Director

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