

DARYL FOX: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to today's webinar, "FY 2023 Transforming Prison Cultures, Climates, and Spaces," hosted by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. At this time, it's my pleasure to introduce Heather Tubman-Carbone, Associate Deputy Director with BJA to begin the presentation. Heather?

HEATHER TUBMAN-CARBONE: Thanks so much, Daryl. And thank you all for joining us today. I would like to welcome you and thank you for joining us to learn about BJA's fiscal year 2023 solicitation, Transforming Prison Cultures, Climates, and Spaces.

My name is Heather Tubman-Carbone. As you heard, I'm an Associate Deputy Director at BJA and I am pleased to be joined by my colleague, Jessa Wilcox, a Senior Policy Advisor at BJA. Thank you for joining us to learn about this program. We have a lot to cover during the webinar and we want to leave some time for questions, so I'm just going to start right in with the agenda.

During today's webinar, we'll give you an introduction to the Office of Justice Programs and the Bureau of Justice Assistance. Then I will give an overview of this program, which is brand new in fiscal year 2023. I will get into the why of us competing this program, the objectives of the program, and the deliverables. Then, I will turn the presentation over to Jessa, who will go into the details of the solicitation, who is eligible to apply, how to apply, and what is required in the application. Jessa will also go over some online resources that OJP has created to assist anyone interested with the application process. Finally, there will be time for questions and answers at the end.

So, first, let's start with a brief overview of the Office of Justice Programs, also known as OJP, and the Bureau of Justice Assistance, BJA.

The Office of Justice Programs is a federal agency that provides leadership, grants, training, technical assistance, and other resources to improve the nation's capacity to prevent and reduce crime, assist victims, and enhance the rule of law by strengthening the criminal and juvenile justice system.

OJP is one of the 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.

OJP is made up of six program offices. On the right-hand side of the slide, you can see these offices listed including BJA, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office for Victims of Crime, the Office of Juvenile Justice and

Delinquency Prevention, and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance, BJA, was created in 1984 to reduce violent crime, create safer communities, and reform our nation's criminal justice system. BJA strengthens the nation's criminal justice system and helps America's state, local, and tribal jurisdictions reduce and prevent crime, reduce recidivism, and promote a fair and safe criminal justice system. BJA focuses its programmatic and policy efforts on providing a wide range of resources, including training and technical assistance to law enforcement, court, correction, treatment, reentry, justice information sharing, and community-based partner to address chronic and emerging criminal justice challenges nationwide.

BJA supports the criminal justice field in four specific ways. First, we fund. BJA provides funding in the form of grants of federal dollars directly to the field, and we fund technical assistance providers to support grantees in achieving their goals. Second, we educate. We share what we and our providers learn with the field, including research, development, and delivery of what works. Thirdly, we equip. We create and equip the field with the tools and products to build capacity and improve outcomes. Fourth, and lastly, we partner. BJA consults, connects, and convenes with our partners in the field.

Now, I'd like to dive into the program. As I mentioned, this is a new program for BJA, one of which we're really excited about and that we believe is directly responsive to the needs that we are hearing from criminal justice stakeholders today. Since the end of the pandemic, BJA has made concerted effort to get out into the field to meet with our stakeholders and to learn what challenges we were facing now, what are the challenges you see in the future, and how can BJA be most responsive to addressing them.

One stakeholder group we especially wanted to hear from was prison, the correctional agencies that oversee them, the individuals who staff these facilities, and the people who are incarcerated in them. Overwhelmingly, we heard that the paramount challenges are: maintaining adequate staffing, recruitment, training, and retention; being able to address all of the mental and physical health needs of both staff and people incarcerated in the facilities; and how to achieve goals when the culture, climate, and space do not always promote rehabilitation and other mission-driven goals of correctional agencies. Along with learning about the challenges, BJA also wanted to learn where the specific outcomes this group of stakeholders were trying to achieve. We heard outcomes such as sufficient staffing and retention of corrections professionals who are able to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. We heard about safety, health, and wellness of staff and people incarcerated in prison facilities. And about the

human and rehabilitative environment that promotes the successful reintegration from incarceration to the community as a shared goal. We know the challenges, we know the outcome. How best to address the challenges to change the outcome is the question.

This brings us to culture, climate, and spaces. A prison's culture, climate, and spaces sit at the intersection of the challenges and mission-driven outcomes that corrections professionals are working to achieve. Prisons cannot make long lasting improvements to the latter without addressing problems in the former. Therefore, this program focuses on transforming the culture, climate, and spaces of prisons as a prerequisite for achieving desired outcomes. When we talk about culture, we're talking about the relationship and interactions between the people who work and/or incarcerated in facility, and how those groups both adapt to their shared environment. When we talk about climate, we're talking about the social, emotional, organizational, and physical characteristics of a correctional institution as perceived by people incarcerated and working there.

One example of the impacts of culture and climate is that research has shown correctional officers experience high stress levels, burnout, and a variety of other mental health-related consequences of their job. Together, the negative physical and mental health outcomes for corrections officers can have harmful effects on the wider culture and climate of the corrections institution.

When we talk about spaces, we're wondering how the spaces in the correctional institution promote the desired outcome. Do they offer natural opportunities for engagement? Can they be designed from a therapeutic or rehabilitative point of view? And if not, should they be? So the purpose of the present project, this solicitation, is to support state prison systems and criminal justice agencies responsible for them in assessing and transforming their cultures, climates, and spaces. We are also looking to develop a website with curated resources that will advance knowledge of prison operation. This is all to further the Department of Justice's mission to create a more spaced and humane prison system.

To achieve this purpose, BJA is funding two categories of work in this solicitation. First, we're funding a training and technical assistance provider to help prisons and state correctional agencies assess and transform their cultures, climates, and spaces with the goals of improving outcomes, including but not limited to staff recruitment, training, retention, and wellness; the design of spaces and the structure of people's time to prepare them for reintegration to their communities; and strategies that will promote and sustain these changes.

BJA is also looking to fund a provider that will develop, manage, and promote a website with curated resources to advance knowledge around prison operation. Each category has specific objectives. In Category 1, the TA provider must define a spectrum of strategies and practices, and support sites in assessing where they are on that spectrum of having the most appropriate culture, climate, and spaces to produce the right rehabilitative outcomes, and then, determine their incremental or comprehensive targets for change. BJA is interested in a provider working with sites that are ready for smaller changes, such as assessing their current culture and developing an action plan in response, and also with sites that are ready for comprehensive changes, such as transforming policy around programming, staffing, or redesigning housing units or entire facilities.

The next objective, the heart of this project, is to actively engage with the sites to make measurable changes. One thing to know, this engagement is providing technical assistance and training support to the field. It may, but is not required to, include setting aside a portion of the funding for pass-through to competitively selected sites. Applicants that propose to pass-through funding to sites must explain how those sites would be selected, define the amount of funding that would be made available to them, and state how many will be served in this way. In addition, applicants must articulate how they will, in coordination with BJA, monitor each of those subawards or those pass-through dollars to ensure they expend the funding in ways consistent with the DOJ Grant Financial Guide.

Other objectives in Category 1 include, identifying model sites to serve as a resource to others around the nation, to establishing learning communities within the sites that are receiving technical assistance. And these learning communities will be inclusive for sites based on where they are on that spectrum of change, as well as what their targets are and where they want to see their agencies go. This TA provider should also propose to develop tools and resources for the field, such as checklists, surveys, curricula, cultural assessment tools, and technology. They should additionally promote correctional agencies' collection and analysis of data to measure the impact of reform.

Moving over to the objectives for Category 2. This is the one about the website. So this applicant pool should propose to develop and maintain a website that advances knowledge about prison operations and curates and disseminates actionable information on transforming prison cultures, climates, and spaces. They should establish and maintain relationships with experts on relevant topics and in positions to influence and engage prison practitioners. There are specific deliverables under both categories as well tied to the objective. We've included the major deliverables on this slide, but please review the solicitation closely for a list of every deliverable.

As you see on this slide for Category 1, the TA provider will develop and execute a process to select four to eight sites to receive intensive TA. Once those sites are selected in concert with BJA, the provider will engage in a planning process, develop an individualized work plan, assist sites and project execution, and it may include pass-through finding. This provider will also establish and convene learning communities and identify model sites, and develop and disseminate tools and resources to the field, as well as respond to ad hoc requests for technical assistance. Lastly, this provider will hold a national convening of selected sites, as well as stakeholders and correctional leaders to promote peer-to-peer learning and best practices.

For Category 2, this provider will develop, maintain, expand, and promote a website on prison operations and all of BJA's prison-related work. They will receive and refer TA requests from the field to the other awardee. They will coordinate with and reach out to national experts on prison operations and culture change. And now I'm going to turn things over to Jessa to discuss the eligibility and application requirements.

JESSA WILCOX: Thank you so much, Heather. As Heather said, my name is Jessa Wilcox and I'm going to go over some key points around the eligibility and the application requirements.

So, first, just some general information. As Heather just went over, there are two categories in this solicitation. For Category 1, the TA category, we will be making one award for up to \$3 million. The period of performance for this award is 36 months, and the award period begins on October 1st, 2023, this year. For Category 2, we also plan on making one award of up to \$500,000. The period of performance is also 36 months and begins on October 1st, 2023 as well. In both categories, eligible applicants include for-profit organizations, other than small businesses, nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education, nonprofits that do not have the status of the IRS, private institutions of higher education, and public and state controlled institutions of higher education. Just to be clear, the state correctional agencies are not eligible applicants for this award. This is not a site-based grant award. This is a TA award.

BJA will accept applications in either category when two or more organizations plan to carry out this award. One entity, though, must be the applicant. All others can be proposed as subrecipients. And, BJA may elect to fund applications submitted this year in future fiscal years.

So, on to the application. There are many elements in this application. At the end of the solicitation, you can find the application checklist which outlines all of the elements. Please use the checklist to make sure your application is complete. So, you see them listed on the slide, but I'm going to go into a few of these elements in more detail on the next slide.

So, you'll see in the solicitation that some of the application elements are included as Basic Minimum Requirements, or BMR. As you probably know, BJA relies on peer reviewers to review, comment, and score applications considered for funding. These peer reviewers are subject experts that are pooled from a diverse spectrum of practitioners, researchers, advocates, and TA providers. We rely heavily on the scores and comments when making our funding determinations. So applications will not even make it to the peer review process unless the application includes the Basic Minimum Requirements. And all the elements for this solicitation are listed on this slide. There's the Proposal Abstract, Proposal Narrative, the Budget Web-based Form, Documentation of Proposed Subrecipients and Procurement Contracts. And then for Category 1, you must submit supporting documentation of Past Technical Assistance Delivery Experience. And for Category 2, you must include Supporting Documentation of Past Website Development Experience. So, just please make sure you're submitting all the applications, but just a note of caution that the application won't even make it to the peer review process unless the Basic Minimum Requirements are submitted. Next slide.

Thank you. Just to spend an extra second on the narrative. This is the applicant's chance in approximately 20 pages to really explain to the peer reviewers and BJA what the applicant thinks is the issue that we're trying to address, how they will address the issue, and how they have the ability to successfully complete the project. So the narrative is composed of four different sections. First, the Description of the Issue. The applicant must demonstrate a thorough understanding of the problem, discuss the landscape around the problem, including relevant efforts and specific challenges, and sources of potential support or resistance in the prisons you imagine working with.

Next, the Project Design and Implementation. This is where you define your strategy and your activities for BJA. For those applying in Category 1, make sure you address any challenges that might be faced when undertaking culture change work. For example, skepticism, generational differences, budgetary constraints, union representation, and you also in this section include information on priority considerations, which we'll get into in a little bit.

Next, Capabilities and Competencies. Just note in this solicitation, there are specific directives for applicants applying in either Category 1 or Category 2, so please review the solicitation closely to make sure you are being fully responsive to the prompts in each category. And then Plan for Collecting Data. This is where you describe the process for measuring project performance, identify who will collect the data, who is responsible for performance measurements, and how the information will be used to guide and evaluate the project's impact.

So, there are two priority considerations included in this solicitation. And two priority considerations that apply to almost all of OJP's solicitations this year. Priority considerations are important for potential applicants to consider because if two applicants are rated the same or similarly via BJA's objective applicant peer review process, and one applicant addresses one or more of the priority consideration and the other applicant doesn't, this could give a slight nudge to that applicant. We encourage applicants to seriously consider if and how you can address and integrate one or more priority considerations. But just to note, just including the priority consideration in no way means that that applicant will be chosen to be funded.

This year, priorities reflect DOJ's general priorities that promote racial equity, increase access to justice, support crime victims and individuals impacted by the justice system, strengthens community safety and protects the public from crime and evolving threats, and builds trust between law enforcement and community populations.

So, the two specific Priority Areas in this solicitation are based on Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. And the first is for projects designed to promote racial equity and remove barriers to justice and opportunities for communities that have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by inequality. Applicants applying for this priority consideration must address it in the Project Design and Implementation section of the narrative, and also reflect any activities related to this consideration in the web-based budget.

The second Priority Area is for applications that demonstrate that their capabilities and competencies for implementing their proposed projects are enhanced because they identify as a culturally specific organization. And applicants applying for this priority consideration must address it in the Capabilities and Competency section of the narrative and in the web-based budget. Next slide.

And just to note that the applicant will submit budget information in the web-based form, and as I just said, include any information relevant to priority consideration A and, next

slide, B if applicable. Note that if you are applying for B, the culturally specific organization must reflect a minimum of 40% of the total award funding.

Another application element is Memorandum of Understanding or Letters of Support. The application should include a Letter of Intent from every partner entity named in the application. And these letters should include the name of the organization involved in the agreement, the scope of the work to be performed, and the duration of the agreement.

So, once the application is submitted and checked to make sure the Basic Minimum Requirements are included, it then goes to peer review for review and for scoring. And the scores are weighted as follows: 10% each will go to the Description of the Issue, Plan for Collecting Data for Performance Measures, and the Budget, 30% of the score is based on the Capabilities and Competencies, and 40% is the Project Design and Implementation.

So, as you are applying and writing your application, you might have questions about allowable uses of funds, rules around subrecipients, and many other questions. Please use this URL on the slide and look at the DOJ Grants Financial Guide. It's really helpful in making sure that your project follows all of the federal rules and regulations.

So, now that you've heard about the application, I just wanted to flag for you what you need to do before you apply. You must register with the System for Award Management, or SAM. Just please note this can take up to 10 business days, so don't delay.

And here are the two Application Deadlines. As we've done for the past couple of years, there's a two-step process for applying for these federal awards. Step 1 is you must submit the two forms on the slide at Grants.gov. These must be submitted by July 18th. You cannot get to Step 2 if you missed Step 1. And then Step 2 is the full application with all of the attachments. And this must be submitted to JustGrants by July 25th. Please note the submission deadline for both Step 1 and Step 2 is 8:59 p.m. Eastern Time.

You can find some additional information on this slide. The URLs are listed on How to Apply and a Submission Checklist.

And just here's a quick checklist that we've put together for when you're submitting an application. Make sure you identify the forms needed to submit, where to find them, fill

them out, complete the Web-based Budget Form, complete the application, and submit the application.

So, that was a lot of information, and sometimes it can be slightly overwhelming to apply for federal funding. So OJP has put together several resources to assist applicants. So, I'm just going to quickly go over these. First, you can see the URL at the bottom of this slide. It's for the OJP Grant Application Resource Guide. This has everything from how to apply to how to become a peer reviewer in future years.

Next, this URL again at the bottom of the slide, all about JustGrants. If you have never applied for federal funding before, please go to this link and familiarize yourself with JustGrants. Finally, BJA wants to make this process as smooth as we possibly can. So, OJP offers assistance with each step of the application process. First, if you're having questions or challenges with Grants.gov, there's a support hotline and email address. This assistance is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week except federal holidays. Likewise, if you are having questions or troubles with JustGrants, please contact the JustGrants technical support line. Again, it's lots of hours of operation, Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., and then Saturday, Sunday and federal holidays from 9:00 a.m to 5:00 p.m.

In general, just please stay connected with OJP. Learn about all of our work, all of our funding opportunities that are coming out. There's a couple ways to do this. You can subscribe by going to the URL at the bottom of this slide, or you can text OJP your email address to 468-311 to subscribe.

You could also stay connected with us via Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Also, please just text frequently BJA's website, bjajob.gov, with all of our funding opportunities, publications and initiatives.

If you have any questions about the content of this solicitation or anything that's not related to Grants.gov or JustGrants, please contact the OJP Response Center. And you can see the hours here, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday. They have an email address, a toll free number and a TTY line.

Finally, just a quick reminder that there's two deadlines for this solicitation, and a helpful slide where it has all of the important contact information in one place. So, thank you all for joining us today. Heather and I will stay on the line and we're available for any questions anyone has.

HEATHER TUBMAN-CARBONE: Thanks so much, Jessa. So, I see a couple of questions coming in. Folks, please don't forget, to ask a question, go to the bottom right of your screen, click on the button and you will be able to get to a Q&A section. So, starting at the top, the first question we have is, "Did we say that this funding will be available next year as well?" At this time, I cannot confirm that. We didn't say it and I cannot confirm that. The current solicitation, this opportunity is for a three-year period of performance. I am not certain that we will then compete it again next year just to cover that time.

The next question is for the MOU. "Does partner entity refer to potential subcontractors or to correctional agencies for the four to eight sites?" So, it is the former. For the MOU, we are looking for documentation of partnership with potential subcontractors.

JESSA WILCOX: Just jumping in, that's a great question. No way does the applicant need to have already partnered with correctional agencies. Part or one of the deliverables is creating the application process for state correctional agencies or prisons to apply for the funding. So, that is not something that you need to do prior to the award.

HEATHER TUBMAN-CARBONE: And in fact to piggyback on Jessa's point in your proposal, applicants should talk about how they will run a process to identify those sites. So, you don't need to have them on board, but you should propose how you will help us identify them. The next question, "Will we be sent a copy of the slide deck?" I don't believe you'll automatically be sent a copy, but it will be made available on the BJA website.

DARYL FOX: Heather, I could expand on that. Once the items are posted to the BJA website, the registrant list for today's webinar will be sent an email when and where to access those. So, do be on the alert for that.

HEATHER TUBMAN-CARBONE: Thanks, Daryl. The next question, "Is there a preference on the part of BJA as to whether Category 1 applicants offer pass-through funding to subrecipients, or accept the award of the applicant?" We do not have a strong preference. Really what we're looking for here is for applicants to propose what you think is the best approach and to support that contention with a strong design and strong activities and description. So, we do not necessarily have a preferred model, which is why we leave this as an option. But it is up to you to decide whether, and if so, how to propose that.

Next question for Category 2 on the website. It says, "Once moved to the .gov platform, how will the key provider update website content?" That is a great question. So, you will

not is the short answer. What we're doing is DOJ and OJP, as we're investing in standing up new websites, we appreciate that there's a lot of work in getting that up and running and maintaining it. And we do not know that things will be funded in perpetuity. But we also know that we want to retain that good work. So, the idea is that when the work is closing out, the site should be ported over to a .gov entity so that OJP can maintain it.

Next question is, "Will a transcription of the webinar be available?" Yes, it will. It will be posted along with the slides on the BJA website. Another question is, "Is the Category 2 award intended mainly for website developer companies, or NGOs that will then work with contractors to build the website?" So, it is open to both. Anyone who meets the eligibility criteria can go ahead and apply. All right. If there are any more questions, please send them on in. Let's give it another minute. One more question we got, "Will we be able to get technical information related to how a website must be built so that it is portable to the .gov platform?" Absolutely. When an award is made, we can facilitate a conversation to answer all the technical questions.

JESSA WILCOX: Heather, I see a question. "Does this solicitation include people with disabilities as a diverse group that requires attention? What about including intersectionality issues in the proposal? Is this a priority?" The language for the priority considerations is in the solicitation. And, A, it does talk about racial equity but it also talks about removal of barriers to access on opportunities for communities that have been historically underserved, marginalized and adversely affected by inequality. And if there are specifics about how people with disabilities have fared within prison systems, I think that would be something that applicants could write and describe if they were going for the priority considerations.

HEATHER TUBMAN-CARBONE: I see another question looking for clarification on whether Category 2 is a single source for all corrections program content or a single site to promote and coordinate the dissemination of all programs efforts may or may not have their own site. So, this is looking for, as you know, BJA or you may know, BJA has a National Reentry Resource Center. We are also in the process of standing up a jails and justice support center and a community supervision resource center. So, Category 2 is to stand up the prison version of that, which will be a sort of public facing arm or dissemination arm of the transforming category here as well as other related efforts that are funded by BJA. So, we'd be looking for somebody, or someplace, rather who will establish and stand up a website, carry resources from [INDISTINCT] that's out there in the field and then also work in partnership with other BJA-funded providers so that all work related to transforming and improving prison outcomes can also be hosted on this site.

We have a question about when the decision for the award is made public. So, I cannot offer a specific date, but award decisions are made by the end of the fiscal year, which means they should be announced—we try to do before October. They are quite a process to get through. So, sometimes it's a bit later, but that is the goal.

One last question I see for Category 1 is, “Can this award be folded into a current contracted project design project? For example, if an organization's already doing this work in prisons, can this award be folded into that?” Great question. So, the answer is yes and no. It's really a no. So, certainly, we love to build on work that is already seeded out there in the field. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. However, all funding must be towards something unique. So, to build on something that already exists, that could be included in the proposal. But we would not excessively double down on something that's already been funded. All right. I think we have answered all the questions. So, with that, I'll hand back to Daryl. Take us home.

DARYL FOX: Wonderful. Thanks so much. And as you see here on this slide, if you do have any questions once we conclude today, as mentioned, the OJP Response Center, you can contact a grants@ncjrs.gov that work in consultation with Heather and Jessa on answering those in a timely manner. So on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Assistance and our panelists, we want to thank you for joining today's webinar. This will end today's presentation.