



TALKING CIRCLE: FUNDING HEALING

QUESTION AND ANSWER SUMMARY

Victims of crime require a broad range of services and resources to heal, become self-sufficient, and thrive. Each year, the US Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) releases funding to support tribes and organization’s serving tribal communities in developing or sustaining crime victim services programs. In Fiscal Year 2018, Congress established for the first time a tribal victim services set-aside under the Crime Victim’s Fund. The Tribal Victims Services Set-Aside (TVSSA) Formula Grant Program provides a dedicated stream of funding made available to ensure that every federally recognized tribe that needs funds to support victim services has access to them.

During a virtual Talking Circle on February 18, 2021 titled, “[Funding Healing: Securing federal funds to support victims of crime in their healing journey](#)” representatives from current OVC-funded tribal victim services programs and OVC staff discussed: (1) how to develop new and enhance existing tribal victim services programs and (2) how funding from [OVC’s Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside Formula](#) program can support these efforts.

The Talking Circle webinar series is hosted by the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), [Human Trafficking Capacity Building Center](#). Following are the questions and abbreviated answers provided by the panel of experts during the discussion, as well as a few additional Q&A’s that we did not have time to respond to during the session.

What are some basic services needed for victims of crime?

There are three basic categories of services: (1) immediate needs, (2) supportive services, and (3) aftercare support. The immediate needs of victims are to be met by culturally sensitive service providers, including primary care and behavioral health staff, and trauma-informed law enforcement. Cultural



sensitivity training can better prepare first responders when working with an American Indian or Alaska Native victim of crime. Supportive services include knowing where victims of crime in rural and remote communities can access safe housing, employment referrals, and receive legal support. Aftercare support can include traditional healing, direct service needs such as transportation, employment, and housing, and dedicated staff to support a victim throughout their journey.

What impact has the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association (APIA) seen as a result of the OVC funding?

Our organization has been able to strengthen critical partnerships, offer targeted trainings, and provide meaningful services. APIA created a resource card for village public safety officers to give out to victims when responding to various situations. APIA found this really helped to link victims to needed services later on. APIA also has held regular meetings with the village public safety officer program coordinator, creating opportunities to create a unified response to victim services in the region rather than siloed services.

Working with OVC's technical assistance providers has been a great resource for APIA throughout the years that they have had funding from OVC. APIA encourages others to tap into the support that is available through OVC. APIA used funding to offer targeted trainings including training behavioral health staff on working with individuals who have experienced violent crimes. APIA also used grant funding to offer trauma-informed care training for all current and new health department employees. This training has had a lasting impact as APIA has now embedded it into its on-boarding process for new hires. In addition, APIA used funding to support staff in attending conferences such as the National Indian Nations Conference: Justice for Victims of Crime (an OVC-sponsored event). APIA found this conference foundational to their work through networking, skill-building for staff, and in generating ideas that APIA could bring back to Alaska to modify and implement in the region.

Lastly, OVC funding enabled APIA to offer direct, meaningful victim services. With OVC funds, APIS has been able to create a safe, inclusive space for victims to be heard, supported, and gain confidence and strength. APIA was able to conduct a community needs assessment, the results of which formed the foundation and core of APIA's services moving forward. This also led APIA to hosting a healing through the arts and culture events in four island communities. The artists facilitating the events were accepting and instilled hope for victims of crime. APIA hopes that the ideas that they have shared will inspire ideas for how OVC grant funds can be used in other tribal communities and programs. They highly recommend applying for funds.



What is the Tribal Victim Services Set-Aside Formula Program and the process to access the funds?

[The TVSSA Formula Grant Program](#) provides federal funding to tribal communities to enhance services for victims of crime through activities that address the unique needs of crime victims in tribal communities. This is a noncompetitive program administered by OVC; formula award allocations are based on population size.

Federally recognized tribal governments (applying individually or as consortia); and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) regional corporations, and their designees, are eligible for this funding. Eligible applicants signal their intent to participate in the TVSSA Formula Grant Program by submitting the population certification form. OVC then uses population information to determine formula award amounts for each applicant. Applicants are then invited to submit a full, [non-competitive application](#).

If you currently have 2019 TVSSA funding, can you still submit a population certification this year?

Yes, all federally recognized tribal governments (applying individually or as consortia) and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) regional corporations, and their designees are eligible regardless of whether they have participated in the past and regardless and if they have received an award in the previous year. You can submit a population certification and apply for funding. When it comes time to submit application materials, you can apply for non-duplicative activities. Many grantees build on existing programming. For example, a tribe received a 2018 TVSSA funding award to start a program, built on that program with 2019 TVSSA funding, and then expanded the program more with 2020 TVSSA funding. As long as there is no duplication in the project expenses and activities, you can apply for TVSSA funding each year.

With the population counts, will that reduce funding amounts for smaller tribes? If so, do you recommend those smaller tribes with smaller populations apply each year to ensure they can cover their annual operating costs?

The TVSSA Formula Grant Program ensures that all federally recognized tribes have access to a base level of funding to support victims of crime plus an additional level of funding as determined by the population tier a tribe falls under. OVC strongly encourages all federally recognized tribes, regardless of population size, to apply for the FY2021 TVSSA Formula Grant Program, to support new and/or enhanced crime victim



services in your community. More information regarding the population tiers can be found [here](#).

Has the grant application changed now that it is non-competitive?

The most significant change is that all eligible applicants will receive TVSSA funding. This is in response to tribal consultations and listening sessions in which tribal leaders expressed a strong preference that the tribal set-aside funding be noncompetitive. OVC now administers this program through an administrative formula. Another change is that the application process requires less documentation. For example, project abstracts are no longer required. Additionally, applicants are not required to submit a traditional, 10 page project narrative. Instead, applicants can choose to either complete a checklist or speak with an OVC grant manager over the phone to create the project design documentation required for submission.

What if– after we submit our population certification– we are invited to apply for more funding than we need? Can we discuss the award amount with OVC before we submit our application?

Yes, you can. You do not need to access the full amount of funds available to you. You can apply in the application for less funds. When the time comes, discuss this issue directly with OVC.

What advice would you give to someone applying for federal funding for the first time?

Apply! Apply! Apply! Definitely apply! All eligible applicants will receive TVSSA funds. Should you be applying for the first time for other federal grants, know the deadlines, attend webinars about the funding, print out the funding notifications, highlight requirements, and circle deadlines. Think about taking a grant writing course (although not required) to understand the basics and then apply, tailoring the application to the requirements of the solicitation or request for proposal. Should the application not be selected for funding the first time, don't get discouraged. Request feedback on any non-funded grant application and apply again at the next opportunity.

Can a tribal designee serve more than one tribe?

Yes, a tribal designee can apply on behalf of more than one federally recognized tribe. The designee must submit an official tribal resolution (or other official authorizing document), signed and on tribal letterhead, from each participating tribe along with the designee's population certification form. If any of the participating tribes apply to the TVSSA on their own, that tribe cannot be included in the numbers for the designee, and the total population submitted by the designee will be reduced.



Do you ever encounter situations where a victim’s story is not believed?

Yes, this still happens sometimes where victims are not believed. It is important for advocates to nurture the relationship with the victims, getting them connected to the right resources, and offering a supportive ear to help support them in their journey towards healing. It is about building trust; letting victims know that advocates are there to do everything they can to get them through the process. It takes time. Patience is essential, creating a space where the victim is believed and is encouraged to share only when they are ready. It is also important to work in the community; letting the community know trained advocates are ready to assist victims of crime. This continues to be a learning journey.

What are other ways TVSSA funding can be used to serve victims of crime?

There are many ways under TVSSA to create a safe and non-threatening environment for victims. TVSSA grantees are using funds to provide services to domestic violence and sexual assault victims, pay the salaries of victim advocates, run supervised visitation programs to allow children to stay connected to their families, and provide civil legal assistance to crime victims dealing with the repercussions of their victimization in the court system. TVSSA funds are also being used to buy emergency groceries or pay for emergency housing or shelter for victims, amend tribal codes to include stronger victim protections, lease vehicles to take victims back and forth to appointments, and hold sings and ceremonies to help victims connect back with their communities. These are only a very few examples or ways tribes use these funds. See additional [examples of program activities and specific costs](#).

**What type of support can OVC offer to help our staff get trained in providing services to victims of crime?
Should money be allocated in the budget for staff training and participation in virtual conferences?**

OVC provides a wide range of training and technical assistance to support tribes in their effort to transform crime victim services and promote healing and justice for victims. This includes offering specific trainings or connecting tribes to subject matter experts in the area where there is a need. Travel costs typically are budgeted for project staff attendance at required OVC and OJP trainings, conferences, and meetings; as well as for project staff (and other relevant professionals who are part of victim serving teams) attendance at victim-related training. Yes, grantees also allocate money in the grant budgets for staff training. Staff often need training when building a new program, so identifying the training opportunities and building that into the budget can be very impactful.



Can TVSSA funds be used for prevention activities?

No. The funding authorization for the TVSSA program limit allowable expenses to those associated with serving crime victims. Examples include activities and services that provide awareness about victimization and the resources available to victims, direct services that meet the needs of crime victims, and assist in navigating the complex systems often associated with victimization (e.g., criminal justice, child welfare). Funding cannot be used for prevention activities. [This document](#) provides examples of program activities and specific costs TVSSA funds may be used for. OVC will review all proposed costs in the context of the grant proposal.

Can you talk a bit about allowable expenses when it comes to renovations to existing buildings? Our Tribal Nation recently bought a church for us which is great and has the space we need but we need to have floors evened out and walls built to provide offices.

Costs incurred as an incidental and necessary part of a victim service program for renovation, remodeling, maintenance, and repair costs that do not constitute capital expenditures are generally allowable for TVSSA funds under the Other category. This may include renovation costs, such as minor renovation, remodeling, maintenance, and repairs made to a facility that will be used for a victim services program. Applicants should consult with OVC to discuss environmental review requirements and timing associated with such activities. More significant construction activities are generally unallowable at this time.

What will be required to apply for TVSSA funds after the population certification is submitted? Is there a long application to complete?

OVC uses the population certifications to determine the distribution of available funds to eligible applicants. The second step is submitting the application. This can be done by one of two ways: (1) completing a checklist; or (2) speaking with a grant manager over the phone. All eligible applicants who submitted a population certification will receive information on the different options for completing the 2021 TVSSA application process. Resources to support applicants are posted at <https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/tribal/tribal-victim-services-set-aside>.

Additional Information

Contact the Human Trafficking Capacity Building Center at contact@ovc-htcbc.org or 1-844-682-0411.

