

AACOG WORKSHOP THINGS TO REMEMBER

GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Please refer to AACOG's Grant Application Guidelines. These can be found at <https://aacog.gov/public-safety>. Reminder: Failure to attend one of the AACOG Grant Workshops or to submit a Grant Summary Form via the NextZen Platform may result in your application receiving an unfavorable review when the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (CJAC) reviews and prioritizes your Grant Application in April 2025. Please review and follow the directions on the Grant Summary Form precisely and leave no question unanswered, all questions on the Grant Summary Form are scored. Answer the questions asked without adding information – this makes it more concise and easier for the CJAC to read.

WHEN TO USE E-GRANTS PLATFORM

To submit an application for a grant through the Office of the Governor you must apply through their application platform called eGrants which can be found at <https://egrants.gov.texas.gov>. The Funding Opportunities/Requests for Applications (RFAs) were released by the Office of the Governor (OOG) December 16, 2024 and the deadline to submit them is at 5:00 pm February 13, 2025. This is a **hard deadline**, and you are deemed ineligible after that point by the Office of the Governor (OOG). Suggestion: **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE** as eGrants can sometimes get bogged down and move slower when everyone is on at the same time. You must submit and have your application certified by your authorized official no later than 5:00 pm February 13, 2025.

WHEN TO USE AACOG'S NEXTZEN PLATFORM

To meet the CJAC Grant Application Guidelines when applying for funds within the AACOG Region you are required to submit a Grant Summary Form (GSF) to AACOG. The Grant Summary Form includes scored information not included in the application. Failure to submit the Grant Summary Form results in an unfavorable review and will result in a lower score. AACOG uses a portal platform called NextZen. Access to this platform will come to you in the form of a link that will be sent out by the AACOG Staff via e-mail on January 23rd, 2025, and the Grant Summary Form (GSF) will be due to AACOG on February 17th, 2025 at 11:59 p.m. Again, this is a **hard deadline**, and the system will not allow you to submit your Grant Summary Form to AACOG after 11:59 p.m. on February 17th, 2025. Your application will still be scored if deemed eligible, however, the AACOG CJ Planner will be required to mark your form as having been received late.

UTILIZING A CONTRACT GRANT WRITER

A contract grant writer cannot attend workshops on behalf of the applying agency. Nor can they present at the scoring and prioritizations on behalf of the applying agency. Always ensure your project or agency plans ahead and can afford to pay for the benefit of utilizing a contract grant writer separately – grant funds awarded are absolutely in no way to be utilized to pay for a contract grant writer's service. Read the bottom line and ensure your agency or organization can afford the additional costs. Lastly, if you have the benefit of utilizing a contract grant writer, please ensure you or your team is consistently meeting with them and provide them with as much information about your project as possible and then be sure to proofread and edit the grant applications prior to submitting the application for your agency (Suggested to proofread and edit at least 10-14 days prior to submission).

CREATING LOG IN TO NEXTZEN PORTAL PLATFORM

Creating your log in is going to be the most important step you complete in this process. Upon receiving an invitation link from AACOG staff on January 23, 2025, inviting you to create a log in please select I am a new user and follow the instructions to create a login user ID and password. NOTE: please use a valid phone number. This will help you with the two-factor authentication as well as if you were to forget or lose your log in credentials. If you utilized the system last year your password from last year should still work.

- If you are an applicant submitting one application per funding stream EXAMPLE LOGIN: user id = ttester@aacog.com password – tacosarethebest! Always go to the home page to select the next funding stream you are applying for. A separate summary form for each funding stream you are applying for is required.
- If you are a contract grant writer and you are submitting applications for multiple agencies this one log in will suffice however, each time you go to apply for a different agency you will need to log out and back in order to create a new organizational profile for each entity you apply for. The system will keep these organizations separate on your main programs page so that you can access them individually. Each time you go to submit a summary form select I already have a login. EXAMPLE LOGIN: user id = ttester@aacog.com password – tacosarethebest! Then Create a new Organizational Profile. Once you go back to your login the organizations you created will be listed there. Select the organization you want to go to and then select the funding stream you wish to apply for that agency.
- If you are an applicant but will also be a reviewer on the CJAC you will be required to hold two separate logins – a regular login as an applicant and a login using a separate email address all together for reviewing. Two separate email addresses are required.
- Always use your resources. Below, please find eGrants, AACOG, and NextZen links that offer guidance in creating logins and filling out your applications:

eGrants links

- Guide to creating an application
https://egrants.gov.texas.gov/uploads/egrants_files/eGrants_Guide_to_Creating_an_Application_12.2020.pdf

- Developing a good project narrative guide
https://egrants.gov.texas.gov/uploads/egrants_files/Developing_a_Good_Project_Narrative_Guide.pdf
- Guide to Grants - https://egrants.gov.texas.gov/uploads/egrants_files/2024_Guide_to_Grants.pdf
- Common monitoring findings and how to avoid them -
https://egrants.gov.texas.gov/uploads/egrants_files/Common_Findings.pdf
- Watch and Learn Videos – at the very bottom of the resources and guidance page of eGrants -
<https://egrants.gov.texas.gov/resources/guidance>

AACOG links

- Criminal Justice FY2026 Grant Materials - <https://aacog.gov/public-safety>

NextZen links

- NextZen Creating a Login (video instructions) - [Creating a Login Video Link of Administrators, Applicants, and Reviewers](#)
- Organization Applicant Profiles - [Instruction link for starting an application, search existing profiles, creating using GuideStar and creating a new organization profile](#)

ITEMS SEASONED CJAC MEMBERS WILL LOOK FOR (COMMON MISTAKES NOT TO REPEAT):

MISSION STATEMENT EXPECTATIONS FOR GRANT SUMMARY FORM


When applying for VOCA funds you will be asked to state your mission. This is the mission of the agency as a whole, not the vision of the program or proposed project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION EXPECTATIONS FOR GRANT SUMMARY FORM

When stating the description of your project please keep it brief and in three sentences or less.

COLLABORATION DEFINITION/EXPECTATIONS

ALWAYS ANSWER THIS QUESTION regardless of which funding stream you are applying within – it is a scored criteria. Even for JAG Equipment Only Applications – they are still scored for collaboration: For Law Enforcement Agencies, you likely collaborate with other jurisdictions, community partners/organizations. Due to the highly competitive nature of this funding, it is in your best interest to identify any level of collaboration rather than receive a zero score for that section of your Grant Summary Form. List organization collaborative efforts for your agency as a whole. [Collaboration Examples](#): Multi-Jurisdiction Task Forces; a county purchase communications infrastructure that allows linkage with other jurisdictions;



crime lab personnel to process evidence from multiple jurisdictions. Not Really a Collaboration: Agency purchases a mobile speed trailer and will loan it out occasionally if jurisdictions need it. Note: Projects \$100,000 or less may also have collaborations between more than one agency. If so, make sure to submit the required supporting documentation.

SUSTAINABILITY EXPECTATIONS

When you are asked if you have a sustainability plan do not leave this section blank – please annotate and put a narrative of how your program plans to sustain itself if funding is not available or how do you plan to become sustainable should funds not be available in the future. Be succinct and concise – DO NOT COPY and PASTE. Also, please plan to speak about this at your presentation. If possible, have your financial officers that work with your program available at the scoring and prioritization meetings to answer these questions and speak on these points should you need them to. “The program/project will not happen without funding” is NOT a sustainability plan. Practice with other grant writers, family, or your team. Get comfortable with the information. You know your project better than most so ensure you are familiar with what you are presenting.

BUDGET CLARIFICATION


Please list out your budget line items. This lets the CJAC get a clear idea of how your dollars will be spent for your program. If you are a continuation project, please be prepared to provide an explanation if your program was not able to spend down all dollars received in the previous three years. Advise why or what the situation was. For personnel, it should include a brief description of what direct services that position will provide, as well as the salary or hourly rate. A simple title does not suffice and could have an impact on your total score. Do not ask for more than you can spend. IMPORTANT: If you are unsure in any way that your project will **not** move forward after the submission deadline, PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE withdraw your application prior to the deadline. We do not want to recommend a project, and the funding will go unused in our region. These dollars are initially allocated to AACOG's Region, and we don't want to lose them. If you are awarded but do not use the award, then those dollars could be deobligated and given back to the Governor's office to use anywhere in the state. It doesn't have to be reallocated back into our region's projects.

THINGS TO NOTE ON FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

VOCA & CSEY Residential and Community Based Services are now listed under the General Victim Assistance Grant Program Funding Opportunity. If you open the solicitation: <https://egrants.gov.texas.gov/fundingopp/general-victim-assistance-grant-program-fy2026>, and scroll down to the Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth (CSEY) Residential and Community Based Services section, it will instruct applicants interested in undertaking those activities to apply for the funding opportunity titled “Victim Assistance, Residential and Community-Based Services for Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth,” which is the second opportunity shown that you can apply for.

This funding opportunity generates different activities and certifications than the General Direct Services program, therefore applicants interested in applying through that opportunity as well as the General Direct Services can submit one application for each opportunity. Please know that both programs will compete together at the regional level.

Also note, the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (the CJAC) will be completing a review of the applications after the application deadline and will determine if organizations and agencies applying under this funding opportunity are Victim Focused or Victim Serving. Those determined to be Victim



Focused will be given an additional 5 points on their prioritization score. Concerns or questions on this can be directed to the AACOG Staff prior to the day of scoring.

JJDP & Truancy Prevention have been listed under one funding opportunity over the last few years. JJDP is for non-profit organizations and some ISD's depending on their activities listed. Truancy Prevention is for ISDs, prosecution/courts, and government agencies. Everyone starts out in one funding opportunity account (JJDP-SF) the eGrants system does not let you choose what category you want to apply under – there was an error in the system where it showed the opportunity to apply under each however that error was quickly corrected right away and the only opportunity any JJ or TP applicant should be able to apply under is JJDP-SF. After the application deadline of Feb. 13, 2025 at 5:00 PM the Governor's Public Safety Office staff will begin reviewing all applications received under this opportunity and depending on the activities listed and the reporting requirements the applications will be separated into two files at this point, one for Juvenile Justice and another for Truancy Prevention. AACOG will be batched the applications in the two separate files in March 2025 and this is where they will remain throughout the application process. Only the Governors PSO makes this determination, and AACOG CJAC will then score in separate categories and RBEs will be sent in separate categories closer to the scoring and prioritization dates. If at any time, there are questions related to this please reach out to AACOG staff.

USE THE S.M.A.R.T RULE WHEN CREATING YOUR APPLICATIONS

Specific – Make your goal specific and narrow for more effective planning

Measurable – Make sure your goal and progress are measurable

Achievable – Make sure you can reasonably accomplish your goal within a timeframe

Related to solutions – Your goal should align with your values, mission and objectives

Time Sensitive – Set realistic end dates to clarify task prioritization and increase motivation