

Small and Medium Sized Agencies NCS-X Teleconference

ERICA SMITH: ...this phone call so that we can create a transcription of it and make it available on the web for any folks who were not able to join today. So if you don't want to be recorded, you should probably leave the call because I have to record it. And then another housekeeping item is that if you could keep your phone on mute while you're not speaking that would be very helpful to ensure that there's not a lot of feedback for folks who are online and then also to create clarity in the--in the audio so that we can transcribe it appropriately. I'm going to go first through some introductions of some of the project staff that work on the National Crime Statistics Exchange. I am likely not going to do a roll call of the agencies that are on the phone, just because that gets a little muddy, and we've done few of these do far, and it seems easier to--more streamlined not to do that. So we'll go through introductions. I will lay out a few of the items that I would like to point out to all of you who are on the phone from local agencies. And then we'll open it up for questions. So as I've said, my name is Erica Smith. I'm a unit chief here at BJS, I oversee the Law Enforcement Incident-Based Statistics Unit, which manages the National Crime Statistics Exchange Initiative.

DAVE ROBERTS: I'm Dave Roberts. I'm actually with the IACP and then I'm on assignment to BJS on this project for the next several years.

ERICA SMITH: If we have any other BJS staff folks on the line, if you could introduce yourself, that would be great.

ALEXIA COOPER: Hi, my name is Alexia Cooper. I'm a statistician with the Bureau of Justice Statistics, and I'm also the overarching project manager for the NCS-X project and look forward to working with all of you.

ERICA SMITH: Oh, that might be it, okay. And our primary partner, BJS is primary a partner on the NCS-X initiative is the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services Division. If we have anyone from FBI CJIS on the line, if you can introduce yourselves, and let everyone know who you are.

ERICA SMITH: Okay. We had them on a call previously, so I wanted to make sure we had a chance for them to introduce themselves.

BETSY MYERS: Erica.

ERICA SMITH: Oh, yes.

BETSY MYERS: This is Betsy Myers with FBI CJIS Division. I apologize, I didn't get my mute button off there fast enough.

ERICA SMITH: No problem. I know how it goes. Thank you. Hi, Betsy, welcome.

KIMBERLY MARTIN: Hey, Erica, this is Kim. I'm also on the line. I'm Kimberly Martin from BJS, I'm also in the Law Enforcement Incident-Based Statistics Unit.

ERICA SMITH: And Kim is a great manager here at BJS for this particular project in addition to being a statistician. So you--some of you may get to know her well over the next couple of years if you decide to apply. We also work with the NCS-X Implementation Team which is a team of subject matter experts and contractors to help us interface with the local agencies, and with the state UCR programs, they provide technical and implementation assistance across the myriad of different program areas. The team is led by RTI International and it's made up of staff from IACP, PERF, the Police Executive Research Forum, SEARCH, and the IJIS Institute. If there are any of the NCS-X team members on the line, if you could introduce yourselves, that would be great.

KAREN LISSY: Hi, Erica.

FEMALE: [INDISTINCT] this is [INDISTINCT] with [INDISTINCT]

ERICA SMITH: Hi...

KAREN LISSY: And this is Karen Lissy--and this is Karen Lissy with RTI.

ERICA SMITH: Hi...

MARK POPE Hi, this is Mark Pope with RTI.

BRIAN ACKEN: Hey, everybody, it's Brian Acken from RTI.

BOBBY: Bobby...

MICHELLE PASTER: And this is Michelle Paster from RTI.

ERICA SMITH: So I heard Bobby and Michelle. Great. Okay. Well, thank you all very much for introducing yourselves. So I'm going to--at this point run through a few of the components of the solicitation that I wanted to draw attention to for the potential applicant agencies who are on the line. And then we'll open it up for questions. First I wanted to--let me see what order I want to go in here. I wanted to draw your attention to items on--that begin on page 10 of the solicitation. Under the section labeled Statement of Work and Deliverables. There's a list of ten items--nine, I'm sorry, I said ten on the call this morning, and I keep getting wrong. A list of nine items there that applicants should address in their application materials. So these include things like a review of the current and anticipated technical capacity of your RMS system or your incident management system, staffing needs, types of technical assistance that you believe you might need during this process. There's a number of items there that I wanted to draw your attention to, ensure that those--that you address those within your application. And then I would turn your attention--these are--these two things are

related to one another in a lot of ways. I would draw your attention to the content that begins on page 17 of the solicitation. Under the Program Narrative section. This is where we lay out the components of the program narrative on which your application will be evaluated. This is a statement of the problem, the project design and implementation, and the capabilities and competencies, in addition to budget which is a separate document, but these three components of the program narrative are what you--are a good--will make up a good portion of the score that the applications we receive during the peer review process. I'd like to point this out to you and ask that you make sure within your application that you clearly indicate you've responded to each of those sections under this program narrative sub-header that starts on page 17. And marry up the responses to those particular issues listed on page ten, those nine items on page ten about what the application should address, ensure that those are included within the structure of the program narrative, whether that's in the project design or the capabilities and competencies that--wherever it's most appropriate, make sure that those nine items from page ten are--lots of numbers [INDISTINCT] the nine items that start on page ten are addressed within the program narrative. The components of which are listed on page 17 of the solicitation.

There's also--there are also a couple of statements in there about the applicant including a plan to collaborate with the State UCR Program on the development of the incident-based data reporting and submission structure. That sounds a little bit more formal than it necessarily is. We would like applicants to include in their program narrative how you're going to keep the state program abreast of development, how you're going to ensure that the state program is aware--the State UCR Program to which you report all of your crime data currently most of the time, how you're going to let them know that you are working with the current state incident-based reporting standard. Any of the road blocks that you may--that you may run into in this process in implementing the state standard or mapping to the state technical specification, those types of things. Doesn't have to be a formal plan with specific steps in the process so to speak, but rather that you incorporate into your application, you know, monthly check-ins, or quarterly check-ins, or whatever you feel is the most appropriate thing to suggest for how you're going to interface with the State UCR Program. The same as--or something similar, true for the component that asks for a plan to collaborate with the NCS-X implementation team. A lot of this is taking care of through the structure that we have for holding monthly project status calls, that NCS-X team members will be part of those monthly calls along with BJS and FBI CJIS. But just offer within the structure of your application how you're going to do outreach to the team should you run into any problems during your project implementation, how you might collaborate with them on potential technical assistance, and asking for that kind of assistance. Something relatively high level about how you're going to keep that channel of communication open. Again, it doesn't have to be a plan that you'll detail step by step. I just have a couple other things on my list here. I would draw your attention to the list beginning or the--I guess the--yeah, the couple bulleted items here that begin on page eight of the solicitation about costs that are considered allowable under this solicitation. It's pretty wide open in terms of what is allowable. There's a lot--you can interpret a lot within these allowable costs. And if you have any questions about what might be fundable,

feel free to reach out to BJS, to FBI CJIS, to the implementation team. We've got a couple points of contact that are highlighted within the solicitation. First, we have access via email to the NCS-X implementation team. That email address is in the solicitation, ncsx@rti.org. You can also contact Alexia Cooper who is the NCS-X Program Manager. You can contact her via phone or email. Those con--those pieces of contact information are on the second page of the solicitation. I would say that under allowable cause, you really have to ensure that what you are requesting has a clear nexus to automating the process of collecting incident-based data, automating the input, the management and/or the extraction of those data from your system. So, if you can draw that clear connection between what you're requesting in the automation process, we are often going to be able to support those activities. But that clear connection has to be made within the application. You'll also see at the very top of page nine a few costs that are considered not allowable. Obviously anything that is outside of the length of the award period can't be covered. And then anything that is--number three refers to any training or technical assistance or honestly any request for funding that is not in direct support of automating those data processes.

MALE: [INDISTINCT]

ERICA SMITH: Yeah, yeah.

MALE: [INDISTINCT]

ERICA SMITH: Yeah. I'm going to go with one small piece of administration first and then go back to a substantive comment too before we open it up for questions.

Beginning on page--let me flip through it here. Beginning on page 26, there is a section labeled How to Apply. I would strongly urge you all to ensure that all of the requirements for making an application in grants.gov as listed here in the solicitation beginning on page 26 are in place before the application deadline. Sometimes, getting these registrations for the various systems that are required like ensuring you have a DUNS number, making sure that you have an active SAM registration. Some of these things can take a few days to a week or two to get up to date or to get fully implemented into the process. So, the sooner you can start that or verify that you have access, the better off we are. Some agencies are used to this process and this is not going to be that big of a hurdle or not a hurdle at all I should say. But then other agencies are not. And so, we just try to point out that this information is available within the solicitation. And I--it's my understanding that as long as you sort of follow along, you know, number by number and look at all of these requirements, if you can check them off your list, then you're probably going to be fine come June 30th when you make the application or before. And there's one last--I think there's one last thing I need to point out and then I'll--and then I'll stop talking for a little while hopefully. One of the requirements of this solicitation is to include what we refer to as a readiness assessment form with your application. The information about readiness assessment can be found beginning on page six. There will be links to the two different types of readiness assessment forms that we have available. One for those agencies that have a--excuse me, commercial off

the shelf system, RMS or--and then one for those with an in-house or custom built system. You can link to them directly from the solicitation. You can also find them on the BJS NCS-X webpage. They are also available on the IACP NCS-X webpage. And we can--if for some reason none of that works, we can also provide you those links directly if you contact any of the email addresses that you'll find in the solicitation as well. If for some reason you feel that none of those--that neither one of those forms actually fits what's going on within your local agency, definitely let us know that directly and we will probably want to talk to you one-on-one offline to figure out how best to fulfill that requirement. But we can be flexible in that sense because that is a requirement that we have imposed here at BJS and not a typical required element of an application through the grants.gov site.

DAVE ROBERTS: This is Dave Roberts. And the whole objective there is the program is designed to facilitate to get agents--400 agencies reporting NIBRS data to the state program into the FBI. This readiness assessment is designed to identify where the gaps exist, either in your information systems, the structure of the data, or your business practices. And that's why the readiness assessment is important because it kind of lays the foundation which then your application will say, "Here's how we're going to address those [INDISTINCT]."

ERICA SMITH: And a few of the agencies or probably more than a few of the agencies have used the readiness assessment as the starting point for discussions with their RMS service provider or other IT folks in the department or in the--in the region depending in--on how they're structured to find out what it will take to make the necessary changes to the underlying system. And then from that, it's from that point that you are able to better see how that's going to cascade down to the impact on business practices Dave was mentioning. So, there is a brief description starting on page six of what a readiness assessment is, what it typically tries to cover within the structure of the document. And if you need any help working through or would like any support I think working through the readiness assessment form, we are happy to provide that through this project. And again, you can get in touch with us with, you know, through any of the email addresses and contact information that is available within the solicitation.

So, I think with that, I'm going to open it up to questions from any of the local agencies that may be on the line. You can ask questions about the pro--the NCS-X Program generally, type--I mean, you can ask really any questions that are relevant to the solicitation that you would like about the program, about the types of technical assistance available, about the application process, et cetera. So, does anyone have any questions right now?

KIM PEARSON: Kim Pearson with Evanston PD. I have a question concerning the actual application on subsections 21 and 22 under the procurement sections, we don't currently have. However, it's being written and it will be basically enacted by July 1st of this year. How do you want me to answer that, yes or no?

ERICA SMITH: Oh. Are you looking at the readiness assessment form?

KIM PIERSON: No, no, I'm looking actually at the actual application, the grant application.

ERICA SMITH: Oh, I'm not seeing the 21 or 22. So, I'm trying to marry up exactly what you're asking with...

KIM PIERSON: Okay. Let me find it here. Hang on.

ERICA SMITH: All right.

KIM PIERSON: Okay. It's procurement standards. Does your organization maintain written procurement procedures, avoid unnecessary purchases, provide blah, blah, blah? You have the yes, no, not sure. And then 22, does your procurement system provide in--for the conduct to determine a selection of--on a competitive basis? Yes, no, or not sure? Like I said, it's being written right now by our legal. And it will be enacted by July 1st. Do you want me to answer that no at this time since, you know, the deadline will be the end of this month?

ERICA SMITH: Ooh, that's a good question. I mean, I would say--I would indicate yes because you will have in place that plan that guides the procurement process by the time this project starts and that is the guidance I would provide. But as long as that's in place when the project begins, then you're--then I would say yes to those questions.

KIM PIERSON: Okay, great.

FEMALE: I would agree with that, Erica.

ERICA SMITH: Yeah. Excellent. And make sure we all say it out loud so we know.
[INDISTINCT]

ERICA SMITH: Other questions?

ERICA SMITH: One--another item I would add is that this is a--technically a competitive solicitation. But the way that the program is structured, you're not really competing with the other applicants at this point. You're really just competing with yourself. Can you, you know--that we need to ensure that you provide the appropriate justification for the project components that you're requesting and then the funding request that is associated with those project components. But you're not at this--at this point you're not really competing with the other applicants for the--for the funding that's available. We're luckily are in a very good position with this program if that's not the case right now.

ERICA SMITH: And there is currently no cap on the amount that can be requested, we just again need to make sure that the justification that you provide for the request indicates a clear connection between what you're requesting and the automation of the processing of incident-based data in some form or--some form or fashion.

Something else that's come up in the past, it's, you know, can you pay for a new RMS? And the answer is generally no. That is not something that we can do. We can't take on that cost. We can consider for--we can consider covering costs associated with the, like a quote unquote NIBRS component to the RMS, that bit of software or code that allow--that implements the added check and validation rules within this system that allows the system to be IVR conformant for the state, IVR process, or the NIBRS standard, depending on the state that you're in.

MALE: [INDISTINCT] upgrades, things like that?

KIM PEARSON: Kim Pearson with Evanston again real quick. Between our dispatch center that's actually the--I guess you would call it the administrator. We're kind of a sub-user for it. They've operated on a wireless system that due to our weather situations up here in Wyoming, tend to go down when we get the heavy snow storms. And information's lost back and forth. Would it be possible to fund a fiber for--between where the servers are and where dispatch is actually located roughly about five miles worth of fiber?

ERICA SMITH: Unfortunately no. We actually had evaluated this as--I believe a couple of years ago when the state of Wyoming had come in for their state application. And they had included that as a component of their initial request which was the fiber between the sheriff's office, right?

KIM PEARSON: Yes.

ERICA SMITH: And your location, Evanston. I think they have done that for you all and then for--and Park County for the Cody PD which is another sample agency in the state. And unfortunately that's not something that we--that we can fund.

KIM PEARSON: Okay. Didn't hurt to ask.

ERICA SMITH: No, absolutely. I'm with you.

JENNIFER: I have a--this is Jennifer from the city of San Jose. I have a quick question. I think I know the answer but I just want to double check. If we wanted a, just say 0.25 of an analyst to help manage this grant, would that be possible?

ERICA SMITH: Generally, yes, it's got to be clear that that person--that the reason for their need--that makes no sense. That the reason you need this person on staff is that they are supporting something related to either the change in the IT structure or in the--with the data management, data verification, validation, et cetera. I mean, it sounds

like--if you're saying you want a quarter of the--a quarter of the time of an analyst, that sounds like it's definitely related to the incident-based data and making changes that would allow you to verify and validate that information. So as long as you make that really clear and indicate what they're responsibilities will be, I think that we would--we would definitely consider that and likely could be something that would be funded.

FEMALE: So I'm wondering...

JENNIFER: The other--more from the physical side, like filing quarterly claims and collecting the data to submit and occasionally follow all grant guidelines. And so more of a grant analyst to support all the costs that are going to be incurred on the grant.

ERICA SMITH: That is a little harder. I would--I would encourage you to include it. I--that leads--that actually leads into something that I said on one of our--a different NCS-X call that I could've probably put in my list of items for the up front that because we're entering into these projects as cooperative agreements between BJS and the grantee agency, we have an opportunity to negotiate some of these components, so if you include an analyst to perform those functions in your request and we come back and say we're unfortunately not able to fund those things--to fund that position, say in this particular instance, we have an opportunity to negotiate with you what the impact to your project's success and to the bottom line of the implementation really would be, because we certainly don't want to say we can't fund a component that would basically torpedo the entire project. You know, we want to--we want to make sure that you're getting the right kind of support in order to ensure that this--that the outcome can be positive, you know, and in the long run. Not only for implementation success, but just so that it's not overly burdensome on the existing staff within the agency. So my advice--my suggestion, guidance would be to include that position, indicate why it's really critically important, why it can be absorbed within a current position, you know, sort of why it has to be chunked out separately that way. And then we give you the evaluation during the peer review process.

JENNIFER: Okay, that sounds good. That sounds very fair. Thank you.

ERICA SMITH: Sure.

ALEXIA: Yeah that was--just a follow-up. This is Alexia. To--that sort of brings up the one thing that we also want to make clear is that there are going to be some things that when we do our evaluations, we need to review all the budgets that are submitted for whether or not the costs are allowable. With that in mind, we're telling people, "Ask for what you think you need in as much detail and as broken down as you can," because when we go through and evaluate them, we're not going to just go through and say, "Okay, this was an unallowable cost. Let's not fund the application." What we're going to do is we're going to evaluate what's fundable, and then determine sort of by line item, red lining what is or isn't allowable. And so it is to your advantage to be as explicit and as detailed as you can with what you're asking for because it gives us a better ability to

determine how it fits in with your project and what is and is not allowable under the terms.

MALE: [INDISTINCT] I think I got it.

ERICA SMITH: Do you have additional questions?

MALE: [INDISTINCT]

ERICA SMITH: Is there anyone else with questions on the line? Well, with that, then if there are no additional questions, I guess we'll just wrap up early. That's fine. These calls have been going pretty quick. So thank you to all of the potential applicants who joined us today. Again, I will just point out that if you have any questions as you move through this process, you know, don't hesitate to contact us, you know, we can't obviously write the application for you but we can provide guidance about what's been funded in the past, you know, how other agencies have approached this work. We can provide out some of the resource documents that--we have a lot that's available online at the IACP NCS-X site, at the BJS NCS-X site, but if there are things that you're just not finding or questions that you might have, you know, we could provide out those additional documents. We can provide out some guidance to you in that sense. So definitely don't hesitate to contact us if you--if you need that type of support. It's not a problem at all. And if you think of any additional questions moving forward, let us know.

JENNIFER: I did just think of a quick question. This is Jennifer from the city of San Jose. We are just looking at the readiness assessment form, and if--so we've already performed a readiness assessment, do we still need to complete this form?

ERICA SMITH: No. That's a very good point. So we've had--got a few agencies that have had RAs done and then others that have not. So you guys are actually--I want to point out that San Jose is eligible under the Phase V solicitation, support for large local agencies. So just make sure that you choose--this is where it's going to get kind of confusing and frustrating. Make sure you choose the right solicitation funding opportunity name when you go into grants.gov but for you all in San Jose, no. If you got your--because you've had a readiness assessment conducted, it's always helpful to append that to your application either the readiness assessment form or the report that was generated for you all. You know, append that to your application but you don't have to fill out the form new.

JENNIFER: Okay. So we'll just attach our report.

ERICA SMITH: Yeah, that would--that would be the best to do I think, yup.

JENNIFER: Okay, sounds good. Thank you very much.

ERICA SMITH: Absolutely. Thank you.

JENNIFER: Have a good day.

ERICA SMITH: You too. Well, thanks everyone for joining us and again if you have any questions just let us know.

MALE: Thank you.

FEMALE: Bye.