

## **Minnesota Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG)**

### **FY2025 Program Narrative**

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs (OJP), serves as the State Administering Agency (SAA) for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program. OJP administers JAG funds in partnership with state, local, and tribal criminal justice agencies to support strategies that improve public safety, strengthen criminal justice system operations, and reduce violent crime.

For more than two decades, OJP has used JAG funds to support coordinated public safety initiatives across Minnesota. These investments support both intervention programming and multi-jurisdictional law enforcement initiatives, including Violent Crime Enforcement Team (VCET) task forces. Through these partnerships, JAG funding supports data-informed strategies that address both immediate public safety concerns and long-term improvements to Minnesota's criminal justice system.

### **Description of the Issues**

Minnesota continues to face challenges common across criminal justice systems nationwide, including workforce shortages within criminal justice agencies, limited behavioral health services, and housing barriers for individuals returning from incarceration. Communities within Minnesota have identified the need for coordinated strategies that address both violent crime and the underlying factors contributing to justice system involvement.

The Minnesota Office of Justice Programs conducts ongoing assessments of statewide criminal justice needs through stakeholder engagement, grant monitoring activities, program performance reviews, and coordination with criminal justice partners. This continuous assessment process informs funding priorities and helps ensure that Byrne JAG resources support effective strategies that improve public safety outcomes.

### **Strategic Planning Process**

Minnesota's Byrne JAG strategic planning process incorporates community engagement, data analysis, and coordination with other public safety initiatives.

In 2023, OJP partnered with the National Criminal Justice Association (NCJA) to conduct a statewide community member survey to identify criminal justice priorities across Minnesota. The survey gathered input from law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, courts, corrections agencies, victim service providers, community organizations, and other justice system partners.

Community members identified several key needs, including:

- Increased behavioral health and substance use treatment services
- Diversion programming and specialty courts
- Expanded reentry services
- Culturally responsive programming
- Improved coordination across criminal justice agencies

Minnesota's identified priorities - including expanded behavioral health and substance use treatment, diversion programming, reentry services, and improved coordination across criminal justice agencies - directly support the BJA's FY25 Areas of Emphasis. Investments in behavioral health services and substance use services reduce the conditions that contribute to violent crime and improve long-term public safety outcomes in communities across the state, consistent with BJA's emphasis on Combating Violent Crime and creating Safe Communities. Reentry programming reduces recidivism and justice system involvement, contributing to community stability. OJP will ensure that Byrne JAG subawards are evaluated for alignment with these federal priorities as part of the competitive review process.

Housing barriers and workforce shortages across criminal justice agencies were also identified as significant challenges affecting public safety outcomes.

These findings informed the 2023–2028 Minnesota Byrne JAG Strategic Plan, which was approved in December 2025. The strategic plan establishes statewide priorities for Byrne JAG investments and provides a framework for aligning federal funding with Minnesota's broader public safety strategies.

OJP also coordinates Byrne JAG planning with other federal and state public safety initiatives, including Project Safe Neighborhoods and state-funded public safety programs, to maximize the impact of resources and avoid duplication of efforts.

### **Sub-Grant Award Process**

The Minnesota Office of Justice Programs administers Byrne JAG funding through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process.

OJP will ensure compliance with all federal statutory requirements for the Byrne JAG program. Consistent with the BJA-established Variable Pass-Through (VPT) percentage for Minnesota, OJP will pass through at least that proportion of the state's FY25 JAG award to units of local government, including cities, counties, townships, towns, and eligible

federally recognized American Indian tribes. OJP anticipates distributing the majority of these pass-through funds through competitive subawards to local jurisdictions and partner agencies.

Funding opportunities will be publicly announced through the Minnesota State Register, the OJP website, and distribution lists maintained by OJP. Applications will be submitted through OJP's web-based grants management system, IGX.

Applications are first reviewed using a standardized scoring process by external reviewers with expertise in criminal justice program implementation. Applications are evaluated based on several factors including organizational capacity, planning process, project design, expected outcomes, alignment with evidence-based or promising practices, and budget reasonableness. After the external review, OJP staff evaluate the highest-ranked proposals based on the following factors, coordination with existing funding sources, past grantee performance, and organizational capacity. In addition, OJP Staff conduct a review of each proposed budget to assess its accuracy, reasonableness, and feasibility in relation to the proposed project activities.

Funding recommendations developed through the review processes are submitted to the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety for final approval.

Prior to award execution, recommended applicants undergo a pre-award risk assessment consistent with Minnesota Office of Grants Management policies and 2 CFR 200 Uniform Guidance requirements. This review evaluates financial management capacity, internal controls, and risk of non-compliance in order to inform monitoring strategies.

After award approval, subrecipients participate in a mandatory grant orientation that covers federal grant requirements, reporting expectations, performance measurement, and financial management procedures.

### **Implementation**

Following acceptance of the federal award, OJP will finalize program design and release a competitive request for proposals consistent with the priorities identified in Minnesota's approved 2023–2028 Byrne JAG Strategic Plan.

Applications will be reviewed through a structured review process and the initial list of subawards will be issued following final approval by the Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety.

## **Capabilities and Competencies**

The Minnesota Office of Justice Programs administers a broad portfolio of federal and state grant programs focused on improving public safety and supporting crime victims.

OJP houses several program offices including the Justice and Crime Victim Grants Division, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Office, Missing and Murdered Black Women's Office, the Statistical Analysis Center (SAC), the Office of Crime Victim Ombudsman, and the Minnesota Crime Victim Reimbursement Board.

OJP administers multiple federal grant programs including Byrne JAG, Project Safe Neighborhoods, Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT), the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Program, STOP Violence Against Women, the Sexual Assault Services Program, and additional federal public safety and victim service grants.

OJP also administers numerous state-funded programs supporting multi-jurisdictional law enforcement initiatives, sex trafficking investigations task forces, prevention and intervention programming, and crime victim services. Coordination across these funding streams allows OJP to leverage resources and reduce duplication while supporting comprehensive public safety strategies.

## **Performance Measurement and Data Collection**

OJP uses a web-based grants management system, IGX, to administer and monitor grants from application through closeout. Subrecipients submit financial reimbursement requests and performance reports on a quarterly basis through this system.

OJP staff review financial and programmatic reports to ensure compliance with federal and state requirements. Monitoring activities include, financial reconciliations, monitoring visits, and technical assistance.

Performance measurement data required by the Bureau of Justice Assistance is submitted through the Performance Measurement Tool (PMT) system. OJP staff review subrecipient data for consistency with project work plans and prior reporting periods before final submission to BJA.

OJP also fulfills federal reporting requirements including the Deaths in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA) through the PMT system.

Through these monitoring and reporting processes, OJP works in partnership with subrecipients and the Bureau of Justice Assistance to ensure federal funds are administered responsibly and program goals are achieved.