

Chris Asplen:

Good afternoon, everyone. We're going to give folks just a couple more seconds to be led into the room. Welcome to the National Criminal Justice Associations session on equity and access equity and grants, administration, and strategic planning. We're all really glad that you're here.

All right, we'll go ahead and get started now. Again, thank you everybody for being here. Good morning or good afternoon, wherever you may be in the country right now. I am Chris Asplen and I am the executive director of the national criminal justice association. Again, we want to thank you for joining us today on this session. We here at NCJA, we try very hard to look through the lens of diversity, equity and inclusion in everything that we do, but we are particularly excited about this specific work in the area of grant administration. While we're involved in a lot of things at NCJA, including a lot of areas in the reform movement and such, it is our particular involvement in what we would consider our lane of grant administration that is really the most exciting to us. And since we all recognize that your true priorities are really reflected in what you fund, we really recognize the importance of the inclusion of equity, diversity, and inclusion in all of this work and being better at it.

And that's why we've put this program together. We're also really happy that we were able to join kind of two sections of NCJA, both our OVC VOCA center work for VOC administrators and our BJA technical assistance work. This is really a joint effort. And again, it's reflective of NCJA's commitment to including that equity work in everything that we do. I want to acknowledge our federal partners in all of this. And I mean partners very specifically, I don't say funders. I want to acknowledge our partners because the folks at OBC and the folks at BJA are constant daily partners in everything that we do, and they're involved in everything that we do. And we genuinely appreciate that because it makes us all better at what we do. Just a couple of housekeeping notes. Number one, we are recording this. We really would like to keep this so that other folks can kind of take a look at it and learn what we're all learning today.

But also there will be a Q and A session. And so, as in most instances in webinars like this, feel free to put your questions or comments in the chat section, and we will try to get to them. If for some reason we don't have time, and if I were to guess, I would guess that the only thing, bad thing that will come out of this is we won't have a time, enough time to talk about everything we want to, we will certainly follow up with answers to any questions that you might have. So with that, again, let me say thank you to everybody for joining us, including our speakers as well. I'm intentionally not going to introduce them now to save a little bit time and just introduce and turn it over to Janelle Melohn, who is the director of the OVC VOCA center, Janelle?

Janelle Melohn:

Thanks Chris. Hello everyone again for those who may not know me, I'm the director of the OVC VOCA center here at NCJ. And we serve as the training and technical assistance provider for VOCA assistance and compensation, state administrators. And while we work with all of you in your offices to find ways to improve access and equity for programs and victims, we too are always working to be better in these areas. And I want to briefly just talk about a few of the ways we're working to embed equity and access into all aspects of our TTA initiatives. So as you can see on the slide, we do this in a variety of ways. First through topic selection, you can see the different topics that we've picked to focus on for webinars, for resource documents for TA, et cetera. Really try to reflect that value of creating and enhancing equity and access for survivors and programs.

So you can see those listed there. For subject matter expert engagement and collaborations, we work to establish a diverse pool of subject matter experts and consultants. We collaborate with organizations whose services target communities of color, like the new CSP center funded by OVC, the Asian Pacific Islander Institute on gender-based violence. The Alliance for Safety and Justice, Sisters of Color Ending

Sexual Assault, Espanza United, et cetera. We are also really intentional about ensuring diverse representations on the recent OVC listening sessions that we've helped host and co-facilitate in some cases. Especially in regards to the new compensation guideline revisions. For customized state TA, we recently worked with one state on a restorative justice initiative and really worked with them to ensure that voices of communities of color were represented in that conversation as a statewide plan was developed. And we're in the planning phases with another state to implement a TA project in collaboration with our JAG SA TA team to evaluate gaps in equity relative to that state's procurement process.

So we're excited about that. Just to give you some ideas, if you want to engage the two TTA teams here at NCJA in the future. All of our resource documents are created in both Spanish and English, our podcast series, we really strive to have diversity and victimization type demographics of the survivor and geographic location. And we hope that if you haven't had a chance to look at those or listen to those podcast episodes, that you take the time. They're on all major platforms. For the technology that we are implementing, we're still in the execution phases of our learning management system, but within it, we are going to have the ability to convert all of our static information into several different languages. And then again, at training and events, we're always asking if there are any accessibility needs and then working to meet the needs of whatever our attendees have noted. But even with all these considerations, we're committed to continuous evaluation of how we do business. So we can reflect the same values we are encouraging of all of you. Jillian?

Gillian Caplan:

Hello. So my name is Gillian Caplan. For those that I don't know, I'm a program manager at NCJA with a specific focus in public safety, and as part of our Byrne JAG SAA technical assistance grant through BJA, we have developed an equity and grant administration as strategic planning program. The reason behind that we really wanted to help our SAAs to include those organizations that are many times not included in planning efforts or funding strategies. So specifically those organizations that are doing the work on the ground, shoestring budget, grassroots that may not even have access typically to federal funding or have limited capacity when it comes to reporting requirements and application requirements as well. And we wanted to really understand the breadth of the inequities and funding and programming. Again, particularly for those organizations that are doing the work on the ground already, but may not be applying for federal funding.

And just as we wanted to understand those challenges and obstacles, we wanted to help to develop solutions and recommendations to address those inequities in our first year. So our first year of our equity program, the components were just a few, but we wanted to do a nationwide equity scan and really gather information on what those obstacles and challenges are as well as some promising practices that are happening across the country. We worked with the National Association of County Officials, NACO on an equity working group where we brought together state administering agencies and county officials to really think about principles and equitable grant administration from both the local and the state level. We had case studies in pilot states, including Colorado, Kentucky, and Minnesota, where we are currently doing a deep dive into their policies and practices and procedures to determine where they could be more equitable within their agency and externally, but then also, where are they doing really great work so that we can share across the country.

And then this will all be culminated in a best and promising practices, final equity report. Equally as important, we will be providing direct technical assistance and we have already, but we would love to hear from states that are interested in any support that we can provide when it comes to equity. As I mentioned, we have some resources coming soon, particularly ones that I'll be sharing after this

webinar. So from that NACO equity working group, we have a one pager and a toolkit that dives into the principles that the group came up with as well as examples from both the county and state level.

As I mentioned, that best in promising practices document that we will be producing that really takes into account all of the areas that we've been working in the first year and puts them into a culminating document as a resource. And then in our second year of our program, as Janelle mentioned, we'll be working with the VOCA center on case studies with states to really take a deep dive into both the VOCA and their Byrne JAG reporting and application process and see where we can assist in to help them be more equitable. And with that, I will give it over to Latrina Kelly-James, who is a subject matter expert in equity, and I'll allow her to introduce herself

Latrina Kelly-James:

Good afternoon. My name Latrina Kelly-James. I am an equity consultant with NCJA and my role has been really in this first year process to work with NCJA and SAA's, and NACO to really delve into this equity process and developed some key practices for engaging in equity. My background is in particularly within black indigenous and brown communities, supporting and building capacity of organizations to access federal funding in the areas of victim services, community violence and intervention, and within the criminal justice space. And so really creating opportunities to bridge the gap in language and understanding around the barriers to funding between grassroots organizations and federal and state institutions. So we're excited to talk with you all about some key practices this year that we've developed through NCJA and the process, and really have you all start thinking about what some of these key practices are and how you can begin incorporating them into your grant making and strategic planning processes.

And so I'm going to start first and just get us some grounding in sort of where we started in this equity work. And we started with language. And so, as we were thinking about equity over the past two years, I think equity has been sort of reactionary reacting to racial uprisings and reckoning with communities around disparities that sort of laid bare through both the pandemic through racial uprisings and those challenges and barriers within our work, but also what opportunities there were to create some deep shifts and how and why equity is necessary and important, and questions come up around starting points. And so our starting point was really around language, like what is equity versus equality? Do we even understand what that means? And so next slide. When we think about equality, it is really the individuals and groups of people that are given the same opportunities, the same resources across the board and opportunities across the board.

And in thinking about equity, it's a bit of a shift in thinking about how each person or individual has different circumstances that warrant different allocation of resources and opportunities to reach these outcomes you want to have for one another. So when we're working to achieve equity, it involves really identifying those individualized needs of specific populations and organizations and being able to implement steps and assistance to meet those needs. Particularly with SAA's practicing equality, you may provide the same support and reporting requirements, for example, to a large metropolitan police department as a small grassroots organization. But if you're practicing equity in this example, you'll work more closely with the grassroots org recognizing capacity limitations and provide required reporting while allowing those metropolitan police departments to rely on their own grants department for reporting. So really understanding the differences in capacity and understanding that you can't provide the same resources when the capacity levels are different. Next slide.

So in this process of identifying equity language and getting a foundational baseline around equity is critically important when we're thinking about grant making and strategic planning. And what we found is we know that we have many different definitions around equity. We know that it's layered and

iterative. And so things to think about as we're thinking about how we define equity, are we centering the most marginalized in our definition to understand the intersections of identity? Are we understanding who's most vulnerable, who've been systematically pushed to the margins? Where have our barriers been placed to intentionally disenfranchise people who represent different communities and what power dynamics is this between institutions and communities? The power dynamics between specific communities, whether that's neighborhoods and law enforcement, or whether it's the court system and people impacted by the criminal justice system, et cetera.

And so when we were thinking about what is this sort of a baseline understanding of what equity is as we think about process and practice, it's really a process of both identifying and eliminating disparities and commitments to shifting power and removing barriers that perpetuate equity. And the question of power became very important because of these dynamics, that there are different communities, both working together, both working in silos for many different reasons and understanding those power dynamics in order to begin removing those barriers around equity. Next slide.

And so part of the NCJA process is this shared language, and why is shared language important? It gives us clarity. It gives us consistency, particularly when we're working in communities. And so some of the biggest challenges that come up when grant making is this lack of consistency, particularly within working in communities impacted by racial and ethnic disparities who've already experienced harm. Shared language, emerges from conversations and beginning to parse out ideas and challenges that create good foundation for moving forward in as intentional ways as possible. And as we were working in this equity process around shared language, we did interviews with SAAs to understand how they were talking about equity. The NACO working group, we looked at preliminary reviews and SAAs policies and practices around equity to really gather information like, what are we saying when we're writing equity and solicitations, for example, what are we saying when we have TTA trainings with potential grantees around equity, and beginning to extract some of those opportunities and challenges that we were talking about around grants administration. Next slide.

And towards this shared language process, there were some key themes that came up. And a lot of these, you all probably will recognize as some themes in your own work. But one of the key common themes were one that SAAs in particular have diverse starting points around equity. And so there's a need to make sure that as you're in your process, meeting your agencies where you are, is important in getting this baseline around understanding equity and racial, ethnic disparities, and the social and political climates across your states may impact how you're able to implement and sustain your equity practices. And this includes changes in leadership. So for example, if you have a new governor, they may shift their priorities around grant making. They may deprioritize equity practices or reshift equity practices within your grant making. And expanding your lens around equity, through understanding both the racial and ethnic disparities, but also the intersections of those identities. And so thinking about how race and ethnicity intersect with gender, with age, with disability, with economic status, with geographic locations and how that impacts the communities you're working with.

And so really panning that lens wide and understanding the impact of all those intersections of identity and how services are delivered and how you structure your grant, making practices around that. And geographic locations impact the resources that states have available. And so some of the things we heard that particularly with states, for example, that have smaller populations, you might receive less Byrne JAC funds, for example, to administer. And so there is a feeling from SaaS that there aren't enough funds to meet the needs emerging needs. And so thinking about that as a theme in how we administer equity is critically important.

And then one really common theme that came up was defining the word community. As we're looking at equity practices, and in a lot of the work across SAAs community can mean very different things. And

so there's a deep need in your grant making and strategic planning work to define what community means for your state, for the communities you're working with in populations and the layers of that. So you may have different communities and beginning to really parse out and create some clear definitions around what community means and the different circumstances in which communities are impacted. Slide.

And so, as we went through the process of this shared language, where you really came down to two things. That equity from the NCJA perspective around principles and practices is really the intentional practice of change to actualize fair treatment, advancement, access, and opportunity for all to thrive. And so what we mean by intentional practice is the continual practice of equity. The continuously thinking about it, continuously incorporating it. Being able to shift, being willing to have shifts, being willing to ask the hard questions, being willing to be intentional about new ideas, new voices within your practices and planning and developing core practices for yourself. And so equity is not cookie cutter, it's iterative. And as I said, it depends on intersections of identity, geographic locations, your social political climates. So really think about what are the critical components and considerations that you need to ensure equity within your processes, both with your federal grants or state grants, the local levels, and really beginning to define those core practices and principles. From across the grant, making continuum. From the strategic planning processes, all the way to final grant reporting.

And so, as we're thinking about these principles, and I know prior to the webinar that you may have received the two page around NCJA's principles that came out of this process, but we really wanted to sort ground you all in these principles around promoting equity in grants administration, and strategic planning. And so what came out of that is four core practices. Intentionality, as I said before. Examining how things have always been done. And so, as you're in your strategic planning process, for example, have you been doing your strategic planning process the same way for the last 10 years? Have you incorporated the voices of the communities that are impacted by the grant making in the strategic planning processes? Are you looking at your risk assessments in your strategic planning to make sure you're intentional about capacity levels for different organizations? And so continuously thinking about being conscious and recognizing new ideas and valuing diversity and spaces, and being in reflection.

And so this is both reflection and being intentional, but also considering as you're going into all of your processes, your personal bias that you bring into that space and deeply reflecting on that continuously, and the social bias that comes up as you're in the grant making review process. Once you receive your applications, are you bringing some type of bias based on the neighborhood or based on the population that is reflected in that grant application? And continue to understand how these show up as both the individual levels and institutional levels and community levels. And then the principle of change and change is difficult, of course, but being open to continuously changing and having shifts in all aspects of your work. And big change can be hard, because as I shared earlier, the common themes around social and political climates and changes in leadership can affect how you can have deep change.

Some states can affect deep change because of structures in their leadership, and some have to think about what are some incremental changes that can have some deep impacts right now? And so being open to change on both the macro level, but also those what seem like smaller shifts, but can shift the ways that you open up access for different communities in your grant making process, and trust building. One of the core practices of equity is changing the way we do things, right? And building trust across our relationships. And so are we building relationships with underrepresented individuals and communities and programs? Are we [inaudible 00:22:58] that in continuous communication and transparency, and commitment to being accountable. Accountable for when we get a-

Latrina Kelly-James:

... Currency, and commitment to being accountable for when we get it right, and accountable for when we get it wrong. And making sure we're transparent about that accountability. So even if you cannot fund a certain priority area, or a certain neighborhood or community or population, building trust with that and relationship with that community to say, "This is why we can't do something." And that trust building then continues to build a relationship for when you can affect change and create greater access.

Next slide. Ultimately, to ensure equity we want that eliminate disparities barriers, we want to change the bar. And often this came up as a principle because we often hear in spaces where we're affecting change and creating new opportunities to engage those across the margins that we're lowering the bar. We're lowering the expectations of communities to ensure equity. But if we really look at it from a perspective that the bar itself wasn't constructed to ensure equity, to be inclusive across communities and cultures, but in actuality, that bar's been put in place to specifically exclude communities, and if that were the case, we wouldn't be in this conversation today.

So we must be in the consistent process of change, and changing the structures of the bar that have been set, and honoring the ways and various cultural and social approaches and ways that communities enter the work. And so that's even looking at changing the bar in terms of how certain organizations or entities may manage funds, or how they may manage their staffing. And being open to it and not shooting it down because we have some structures in place that have always been there and been sort of the way we've always done things.

And so, shifting our language again from we're lowering the bar to we're changing the bar and how we engage in equity. And in the spirit of changing the bar and really putting the shared language and principles into practice, I'm really excited for this panel discussion, which is the bulk of our conversation today, around the ways that state administering agencies, particularly within Byrne-JAG and victim services have begun to incorporate these principles into practice and policy, to make sure that equity is being integrated across all phases of their grant making from concept to strategic planning all the way through grant reporting process. And I firmly believe that the best way to learn something is actually to experience it and share those experiences with one another. So hopeful that this conversation can provide that for all of you on this call today.

So with that, I would love to introduce our panelist for this afternoon. Director Delrice Adams, who's Executive Director of the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, Joe Thome who is Director of Criminal Justice Division at the Colorado Department of Public Safety, Lori Miller, who's the Program Administrator, Victim Services Support Program for the Office of the Attorney General in the state of Iowa, and Mike Pennington, Executive Director of Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

Thank you all for joining us this afternoon. Really excited about the work that all of you are doing in your states around equity and the deep commitment you all put into this work, more than the short term and long term. Many of the folks on this panel today have been part of some of the working groups and processes around NCJA and building the equity practices. And a lot of what's coming up, going to come up in this conversation are practices that they've shared, challenges that they've shared, and so excited to jump in and have you all start to talk about what this looks like on the day to day. And so let me start by asking sort of the general question. Can you all share your agency's work towards equity and grant making and grants administration? What's been the work over the last two years, three years? What's been the bulk of the work that you're proud of that has been the foundation for your equity work? And I'm going to start with you director Adams, for you to share with us what some of that work has looked like in Illinois.

Delrice Adams:

Absolutely. Thank you so much, Latrina. So in Illinois, we've been very busy looking at our policies and practices from a comprehensive perspective and doing a lot of round tables, leaning into community and impacted voices to see where we are falling short in that equity lens. And I would have to say taking a lot of that information and centering it around our grant making specifically. And so I will just raise up one really great project, it's called Institute to Innovate that we decided to launch at the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority based on really looking at equity across the state, looking at how we were not distributing funds equitably and making changes in our grant making process, using an equity score card, having community reviewers. When we began to do those things to shift and turn and do better in terms of equitable distribution, we found that we were bringing in, which was the intention, more unseasoned, grassroots, smaller localized organizations, but who were really doing the incredible impactful work on the ground.

And we know equity is intentional in that it is a system and that we have to look at all parts of the system. So we begin to look at that post award process. Once you get organizations onboard and they have state dollars, how do you ensure that they're successful? What I was finding is that our staff who were grant monitors were becoming technical assistance advisors solely, and they were struggling. They were struggling to have that level of engagement and wrap around, I would say, coaching that was necessary for organizations who had historically been disinvested in and had not had just the seasoned approach of having government funding, whether it was at the city level, the county level. And as you know, many of our state criteria mirrors the feds, so it's even more stringent, have a lot more reporting requirements and compliance. So our institute, it's a new capacity building hub where we're taking grassroots organizations who as Latrina mentioned, have never applied for state funding because they've been historically left out or don't feel ready, or grassroots organizations who took that leap and just don't have that infrastructure in place to be successful.

And so we'll provide an assessment of these organizations, one-on-one coaching with a grants coach is what we're calling them. We'll do a lot of technical support over a six month period, really helping them build their and strengthen their infrastructure and capacity. And most importantly, have sustainability because what is for us the end outcome is that these are viable organizations that can get funding long term and really have incredible impact in their community because they're the ones that have that trusted, built relationship that are able to do the outreach and really service the most vulnerable of populations.

So very excited about this work. I'll land there and happy to take any questions, but just some examples of what the institute will help with is developing their mission, vision and values, helping them with refinement of program models, looking at their staff structure, their staff management, fiscal management as well as grant and fund development, helping them to go after more resources beyond state funding. So really focusing in on that sustainability component and making sure that not only are they successful in whatever grant administration they have going on now, but that their long term can be viable service providers in their community. And I'll turn it back over to you Latrina.

Latrina Kelly-James:

Thank you, director Adams. I'm going to take the question, the chat, just so, because I don't want to miss it. Folks are excited about the institute and I'm just like the fourth time I've heard about it and I'm so excited about it and the work you're all doing, but the question is how is it funded? Which is, I think a key question a lot of folks will have. Can you just share really quickly how the institute is funded?

Delrice Adams:

Absolutely. So, you talked a little bit about political climate. So this was an idea that we brought to our governor and Lieutenant governor at the beginning of fiscal year 23, and we ask for funding for staffing as well as a Seed Grant, because we think the real work is in the practice, that if you can onboard these smaller grassroots, localized organizations with a small grant and really hold their hand, that's where all of the learning and practice and success comes. So we were successful at getting in our general revenue fund, the money for staffing, and then we were guided by our Governor's Office of Budget Management to find a way to utilize our American Rescue Plan Act dollars. And we also have cannabis tax revenue dollars for the actual grant making component of it. So it's a mix of general revenue funds and then other federal funding and state revenue funding for the grant part.

Latrina Kelly-James:

Thank you, director Adams. I want to shift to you director Miller to just speak a little bit more about the policy changes you've made to ensure equitable practices in your agency. You've incorporated state funds and how that translates into federal funds as well. So if you could share with us around some of the policy changes in Iowa.

Gillian Caplan:

Sure. Yeah, sure. This is Lori Miller. I work for the Attorney General's Office in Iowa. And I want to start out by telling you a little story. Recently we had a meeting with some of our grantees. We were talking about some of the ARP funds that we had. And there was a misunderstanding from one of our culturally specific programs that we fund. They thought we would disperse all of the grant funds that we were giving to them in one lump sum. Somehow the ARP was written in a way that made them think we would just upfront all of the money that they were awarded at one time. And then when we explain that that's not really possible for us to do that, we had a conversation about cash flow and how hard it is for CSPs to have this grant money, but not having the cash flow to really work with it as best they can.

And then a woman from one of our mainstream organizations jumped in and said, "Well, you could get a line of credit. All you need to do is you go to the bank, you tell them how much money you want and then they give it to you. And it's just really that simple", to which most of the people on the call, their eyeballs kind of popped out. They're like, "What? That doesn't work that way here. It doesn't work for us." And one of our CSPs said, "You know what they ask me is, where am I getting my source of funding? And they say, 'Oh, it's grant funding.' Nah, it's too risky." And then the other thing they want to do is they would've approve a line of credit, but it had to be attached to a person and not the organization. And so the directors of the CSPs are going to have to personally take on the debt for the organization or to be the collateral for the organization.

So I'm here to talk about the financial advances that we have in our office for our CSPs, because we recognize that smaller grassroots organizations really struggle with cash flow and they're getting grants. A lot of times, they don't even understand that when they get a grant, they don't realize that it is on a reimbursement basis. And so we say, well, you have to upfront these expenses first, and then you give us... You Submit a claim through this system and then we review it and then hopefully within 30 days or less, if we're really on the ball, we'll give you the money back and then... But in the meantime, you need to keep doing the work that you do. And we realize that that's a barrier for a lot of organizations. So we have something called advanced funds and it's on our website.

You can go to our grant manual, you download a form, it's very simple to fill out it. It's an Excel form. It looks like a budget. So at the top of the form, it's all the grant information that we need from you, contact information. And then there's a budget that has payroll, benefits, travel, rent, et cetera. Then you input your budget, your entire budget then you tell us how much you need for an advance. You give

us an explanation, you email it to your grant manager. Your grant manager, me as the administrator and our accountant, we review it. Everybody signs off on it and then it's approved. And what we need to... The couple of things that have to be in place is one, we have to have an executed contract with the grant or the organization we want to fund. So they have to apply for and get their application in on time and we review it and then we sign off and we have an executed budget.

And then we actually set up our new grants management system so that we could account for advances. So it's part of the claim process. One of the options that they can pick is called advance. And the other thing is that we have to use state funds right now, because the way it works is that we allow the funds to be sent to the grantees. So it's an upfront payment before they even submit an actual claim for real expenses to us, but it gives them some operating expenses or operating funds, and then they don't pay it back until the grant year is over. And so that is something we have to remind them of at the end of the year, "By the way, you have to pay back your last claim with your last claim." Then the process can start all over again with the next grant, the grant that they submit.

So it works really well. We try and make it relatively easy for our grantees. And the only thing is they have to remember that at the end of the grant year, they have to pay that back. And of course it's with state funds, it's not with federal funds, but if an organization does want to use federal funds, there is a way to do advances with federal funds. It's not that easy. It's not as easy, just grabbing your state funds and letting it float for 11 or 12 months, but you would do it on a monthly basis. You can't let federal funds sit in your account for a long time without being dispersed. So you would work with your grantees and you could upfront monthly expenses for them. So they could say, "Hey, this is how much money I'm going to need." You draw it down, you send it to them and then they submit the expenses against that claim. But right now we just use state funds.

Latrina Kelly-James:

Thank you. Thank you for that. Clarifying question. So grantees can ask for advances for the entire life of the grant or they can also do it monthly or quarterly as well?

Gillian Caplan:

The way we're doing it right now is, you would ask for an advance at the beginning of your grant year when you're at a time we fund folks. So that's the way we're doing it right now.

Latrina Kelly-James:

Okay. Thank you. Thank you. We're going to shift now to Joe, director in Colorado. Joe, your agency's recognize that for you to be successful with equitable practices externally, you had to start with your equitable practices internally as an agency. Can you share with us what that internal process looks like and what are some practices you all are incorporating right now in your work?

Joe Thome:

Well, thanks. And it's not intimidating at all to follow Iowa and Illinois, so nice job folks. I'm Joe Thome, the director of the Division of Criminal Justice here, and I'm here today, mostly representing some really great work that's going on in our victims and our Byrne-JAG Programs around equity. Latrina, we actually... The first time we looked into this was back in the old OJJDP days when there was passthrough money for sub grants and we noticed a pattern in those dollars two decades ago. And that was about 80% of the applicants, or excuse me, 22% of eligible jurisdictions were getting almost 85% of the dollars that passed through. So even before came into focus in this way, we started to ask those questions internally, where do we go with this sort of stuff? Then the reflection really got serious about 2017, and

then well into the George Floyd years, when our Office for Victim Programs, that team said, "We really need to be doing better. What can we do?"

So they started to look at dollars and if folks send us some emails, we'll get you connected to the real geniuses behind these programs at the office levels in our shop, and recognize that we weren't getting a proportional number of dollars, communities of color, other underserved populations, community based organizations, rural and small agencies, that sort of thing as we're hearing from everybody else here. So internally, the question began. As a division, we started doing more unconscious and implicit bias work. And the question... Well, when we knew that individuals have those biases, we know that organizations have those biases, but can processes have those biases? And as we started to look at our grant making strategy, our Office for Victim Programs kicked us off around this. We started to look at the principles that Latrina talked about. You did Latrina, trust, building change, reflection, intentionality, and notice that when we looked at things like how intimidating are our solicitations?

How well are we marketing to these underserved communities? How can we encourage reluctant partners to apply? This whole risk analysis thing, really intimidates the heck out of start up CBOs, that sort of thing. And have we created sort of an entitlement scenario where those that have received funds over the years, because they're really skilled grant writers continue to get that to the detriment of others that are intimidated by the process or just don't have the skill or skilled bank to be able to pull this off. So that internal reflection became a conversation with the funding boards, and they said, "We want to start to pivot." And I want to share an anecdote, and this is where it really struck me a few years ago. A little storytelling myself. Here is that. There's a gentleman, lived experience, got onto the Department of Corrections in Colorado and recognized that the transition from prison to community was harder than being in prison.

He didn't have any resources. He wanted to help people who were coming out of our prison system back home. He got his old beat up car out of his garage in parked-in areas where underserved communities and basically said, "If you need some help, come and get a breakfast burrito. If you're in a reentry/status and I will help you find your way to the workforce centers, I'll help you find your way to substance abuse treatment", that sort of thing. He built that slowly over time from the trunk of his car program to a multimillion dollar, most successful reentry program in Colorado right now. He has been able to get funding for supportive housing, sober living, that sort of thing. And the way it struck me is that he never would've qualified for any of our federal or state dollars. He didn't have this as...

We heard from Iowa, the ability to claim a line of credit, the ability to have startup costs to make things happen. He was literally working out of a closet when someone saw him working in the street. So we had to ask ourselves these implicit bias questions, and our... So the work is underway here. For example, it's not as... We're pivoting or looking at a different strategy than the Institute. I must admit, when I heard Delrice talk about that in a meeting we had in Baltimore a couple of weeks ago, I was drooling over that strategy. But what we need to do here, in least our Office for Victim Programs as sort of the first out of the gate on this as said, we need to build trust. So let's use a trusted community based organization that does have infrastructure.

Out here, that's the Latino Coalition, to set up a model where an agency with some experience can help smaller grassroots agencies manage federal funds, but also provide accounting, reporting and TA for those agencies. They can help us market the grants. They can help people get lined up for this and they can take the intimidation away. They can help with the risk management analysis. We're looking now at the documents...

Joe Thome:

We're looking now at the documents that might... And in adjusting our expectations, we've learned over time that we seem to add, it sounds like, special conditions in federal grants. We add a question or two every year, right? Because it's something we would like to know, but it isn't something we necessarily need to know. And if you don't have someone set aside for grant management or grant writing in a small agency, you're going to step away from it. So how do we adjust that?

Choosing not to deny grants because that agency is not sophisticated in writing them, right? There's around the table talk in grant management meetings. We have, I think we're up to 14 now, 14 boards and commissions in our division, criminal justice, several of which are responsible for advising on who gets funded. And the table talk is, "Wow, this isn't written very well." Well, that might not be because it's not a good program, it's just [inaudible 00:46:59] searching for what it is that they need from us. So we're changing our criteria and our processes to award more grace to those startups, that sort of thing.

And then LVP in particular, as we're going to work with an outside agency that specializes in accessibility, let's look at the application. Training materials. How do we market this better? How do we make this less intimidating? So we have third party eyes on this, as well as working with those stakeholders to move forward.

So it was a process, to summarize, of looking at our own, I don't want to say institutional biases. We don't want to call ourselves out as people, but the revelation that our system might have some implicit bias build into it, really inspired the teams in both our Office For Victims programs and our Office of Adult and Juvenile Justice Assistance to say, "We have to do better." And it was a really safe tool, a safe way to be moving forward with this. We weren't calling out individuals. We were saying, "How has this evolved and how can we stand this back up in a manner that's appropriate?" So that, in a nutshell, Latrina.

Latrina Kelly-James:

Thank you Joe. I appreciate that and appreciate the story you shared. And what I hear is two different approaches to the same challenges around capacity in organizations. And you [inaudible 00:48:23] drilling over Director Adams' Innovation Institute, but how you altered it in Colorado was actually finding an entity that was outside of the state system to actually do some of that groundwork and TTA. A little bit different structure in a different way, but same goals and outcomes that you want to have.

Joe Thome:

And if I could say one more thing, I know we're getting close. That really will help us with the trust building, right? Is that those CBOs know these folks and that these folks can say, "We've watched what this division is doing and we think they have your best interest in mind. And they're listening to us to make it easier for you." We're going to be able to merge much faster.

Latrina Kelly-James:

Absolutely. Absolutely. I want to kick it over to you, Mike, in Pennsylvania. Can you just talk to us? Your agency created an adult racial and ethnic disparity committee to compliment the juvenile community you had already formed. Can you speak more about how those committees have helped establish your priorities and meet your goals around equity? And how are you funding them? Because I think that's a question folks always want to know in this work.

Mike:

Okay, great. Thank you, Latrina. And good afternoon, everybody. I guess good morning for some. It's difficult to follow Illinois, Iowa, Colorado, but I'll do the best I can. And I'd like just to provide some context before I talk about our racial and ethnic disparity work, just around our work towards equity. In Pennsylvania, we've taken the significant steps to assess our agency's funding guidelines and funding announcement process through an equity and accessibility lens and make improvements.

As one example, our team has learned a lot over the past year, as we worked to launch a new grant program focused on community violence intervention and prevention. Since last fall, we've onboarded about a hundred grantees as part of that program, many of which were smaller, more grassroots organizations, and most of whom were brand new to our agency. So we tried a lot of new processes and procedures out with the hope of having funding opportunities reach groups doing good work at the grassroots and neighborhood levels, who often have been overlooked in terms of resources.

So we used a more flexible and accessible application process. We use SurveyMonkey to reduce barriers for smaller groups, and we collaboratively designed a funding announcement with input from members of work groups and advisory committees that prioritize funding for models and strategies that could potentially have an impact on violence in the short term. So we held multiple webinars, hosted onboarding calls, one-on-one meetings with every end grantee, and made other adjustments to our typical funding announcement and grant making process. And we asked groups to tell us what their experience with those processes were like, anonymously, through surveys issued after onboarding was completed. So that's a long way of saying that we tried to take time over the past year to take notes and listen to the feedback provided by applicants, grantees, staff, and other stakeholders who have been integral to our efforts to make sure we're doing as much as we can to help these important efforts succeed.

So many of these lessons learned have been embedded into the design and structure of the violence intervention and prevention TA project, which we launched earlier this spring. We are partnering with WestEd and LISC, which is Local Initiative Support Corporation, to provide direct technical assistance and training supports for grantees over the next two years, with the goals of building capacity and helping groups working on the front lines of CVI efforts in Pennsylvania and expand and sustain those efforts down the road.

So basically, this would be an online community portal, a resource hub as part of a statewide community of practice. And I won't go on and on about that. I could, but I know we don't have time. But part of that will be a needs assessment for grantees, tailored action plans, bimonthly webinars, and just peer learning groups. So if folks are operating credible messenger programs, they can learn from one another, no matter what part of the state that they're implementing those. So those are just a few examples.

And with the increase in VOCA funding back in 2015, we undertook a strategic approach to the distribution of VOCA funds to sub grantees. The increase, as many of you know, in 2015 and subsequent years allowed for the release of competitive funding announcements to expand programs receiving VOCA funding, as well as expanding services allowed by the change in the federal VOCA guidelines back in '16, and focusing on priorities established by our victim services advisory committee. So that funding allowed us to expand into some priority areas, including services or programs for victims of crime who are young men of color, services for victims with mental illness, services for victims with limited English proficiency and victims who are people of color. And this strategy really helped us increase the diversity and scope of services available, filled gaps in service delivery, and provide services to underserved and unserved victim populations. So our Office of Victim Services did a great job, held regional trainings with all the newly funded programs to walk them through.

And another very important project for us is we are partnering with the Coalition for State Government, CSG, on examining equity in our state victims' compensation program. And I believe five states are part of this. And I understand it's the first national study in this area.

And just real quickly, Latrina, to your direct question, our agencies also focus on addressing racial and ethnic disparities within the juvenile and criminal justice system. So in 2020 we established an adult racial and ethnic disparities subcommittee under our criminal justice advisory committee. So this subcommittee really builds on a longstanding juvenile RED subcommittee that's been in existence for many years, that's part of our state advisory group in Pennsylvania to help us maintain compliance with the federal JJDP Act.

So to really help advance the adult RED subcommittee work, this year we worked with our committee of chairs to reserve approximately 250,000 in state share JAG funds to support a new statewide assessment of RED in Pennsylvania's criminal justice system funding announcements. So we want to be research, data driven. This is something we did in the juvenile area. And this project will establish a baseline of current levels of RED, as well as analyze potential drivers of those disparities through qualitative research. And also look at availability of pretrial services across the Commonwealth, recognizing, obviously, it's a critical period in preventing unnecessary entry into the system.

And just a couple more things. And working with our juvenile RED committee, and this work is funded with federal Title II funds. As some of you know, those are part of the JJDP Act. If you maintain compliance, you're eligible for funding streams, and Title II is one of the major funding streams as part of that. We developed an RED, racial and ethnic disparities coordinator funding announcement, which we resulted in awards to Allegheny and Philadelphia counties, as well as we hosted an RED certificate program in partnership with the Georgetown Center for Juvenile Justice Reform. This included seven counties and a statewide team, and those counties are currently working on capstone projects to address specific issues of RED in their jurisdictions. And the chair of our juvenile RED is also a member of our adult subcommittee, which really helps with communication and coordination. And finally, in November of this past year, our executive office welcomed new staff to help coordinate and advance our agency's internal and external diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. So, thank you.

Latrina Kelly-James:

Thank you. That was, I think, a great overview of where the work encompasses in different areas and not just in one specific area. I heard a lot of things around intentionality here. In the beginning, you talked about the SurveyMonkey process, simplifying the process. Which seems like something very simple, but things that folks may not think about in terms of the barriers or the fear around the solicitation process. And the capacity building you talked about with LISC and the partnerships that are all coming into play, as well as the committees you're putting in place. So thank you for sharing all of that, to give a kind of breadth of what the work looks like across the spectrum.

You all talked about what the work looks like, and some of you have touched on a little bit about where you started in this work, but I'd love for at least one or two of you to talk about when your agency decided to really be intentional about incorporating equity into your work. Where did you start? What was the impetus for it? What was the groundwork laid for it? What was the exact starting point? If one or two of you can just give us a little insight, as folks are thinking about where their starting points are on this work. And I'm not sure who wants to jump in first, but whoever's excited to answer where you started from the ground, I think would be great for folks to hear.

Mike:

I guess I'll give it a shot, Latrina, this is Mike. Yeah, just real briefly. In 2020, we underwent an agency wide strategic planning process to develop our 2021 to 2025 strategic framework. So we do a strategic plan every five years. It's pretty comprehensive. It's on our website. So while discussions around how to increase accessibility and incorporate equity into our work certainly has occurred prior to that in bits and pieces, that strategic planning really helped catalyze those efforts.

One common theme that emerged during our strategic planning process is really the need to, and I think we heard this from the other panelists, to actively engage organizations that have not historically made application for funding or received grant funding from our agency. And we examine feedback provided by applicants, grant recipients, and other stakeholders to identify strategies and to ensure that our funding processes are accessible and equitable. And if we get to the measuring success, we're really excited about just the number of the new organizations that have been able to either access funding or have become part of the process to hopefully grow their capacity.

Because, as we all know, there's only so much funding and everybody cannot get funding, but the more organizations that we get involved and they learn through that process and we provide constructive feedback, the better opportunity they're going to have to be successful moving forward, but also take advantage of our technical assistance project. So even though you're not funded, you can have opportunities to really learn things around governance, data collection, grant management. So we're really excited about the TA project, so we're hoping that'll be really helpful to organizations around the state. Thank you.

Delrice Adams:

Yeah, if I could just jump in really briefly. I would say it predated me, but in 2019, when the new administration, there was a justice, equity, and opportunity office that the lieutenant governor set up. And she spearheads our cannabis tax revenue dollars that come to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. And part of that statute, the general assembly, specifically the Black Caucus, was very intentional to call out equity in the grant making. And [inaudible 01:00:49] ICJIA was beginning that work, there was no template or blueprint.

And so, we really had to start the learning process of what does that mean and how we create a more equitable distribution process? So a lot of different things came into play [inaudible 01:01:08] one of that work in 2020, [inaudible 01:01:11] and we didn't do well. We got a lot of feedback from communities saying the outreach wasn't so great. Or, "Did you really change the narrative and give more money to [inaudible 01:01:27] not really seeing it."

And where the data showed there was improvement, when I came in in 2020, '21, I had been a Chicago United for Equity Fellow and understood the intentionality of equity. And I had some real recommendations for how we are more intentional in terms of pulling in other organizations. We can't just kind of say we want to do it, you have to have very big strategies. And so, understanding that, again, we built a equity score card where we ask real specific questions. Do you have leadership that reflect the communities that you want to serve? Do you have credible service providers that reflect those vulnerable communities? Is your [inaudible 01:02:15] made up of a diverse group of folks? Where organizations could actually get leveraged, weighted points for showing equity within their organizations. And that was a start, just beginning to build on that, learning and understanding best practices for how you integrate equity into our grant making.

And then that pivoted, sorry, to more equity work or [inaudible 01:02:42] practices in our policies. And that's where we are now, just digging really deep to what [inaudible 01:02:48] mentioned and looking at where our policies perpetuate oppression and bias and historical...

Latrina Kelly-James:

Thank you, Mike and Delrice, both of you, for showing us where the starting points are. And Delrice, you touched a little bit on the challenges, a little bit, just around when you first started the work and communities actually making you accountable and saying, "Were you actually doing the work that you're saying you're doing?" Right?

I'd love for you all to, as we pivot to talk about what are these challenges in incorporating equity in your agency practices? It's always good to hear what the work looks like. And you all have shared so much about the deep, intentional work you're doing. But we also shared those things that get in the way, social, political climates. There's issues that come up. So can you all share, in the incredible work that you're doing, what's been the challenges in your practices? And Joe, I'm going to go to you first to just talk about what's come up for you all in the process.

Joe Thome:

Thank you, Latrina. I must have ESP. I unmuted myself even before you said that.

Latrina Kelly-James:

You were ready.

Joe Thome:

Yeah. My response is sort of inspired by what Delrice said, and I put it in the chat, but since you've pivoted over to me, I'm going to expand on it a little bit. I worked in this organization many years ago and then went away and did some other work and came back. And this is not an editorial commentary on any individual, but again about the system. In that so many of the practices that we had in place were so ingrained and institutionalized, that the change management process for us internally intimidated people. It's that, "Are we going to be held accountable for things where we are adjusting based on this expectation of equity, diversity, and inclusivity along established fiscal rules?" That sort of thing.

And the people that are responsible for that see how the folks on the program side speak loosely of what their obligations are. It's like, "Well, it's in the way. Let's move forward, let's get these things done." And for us, much of our challenge, it's been a little bit about understanding how to make this less intimidating while still holding everybody accountable to fiscal rules for those sub-grantees. But honestly, goodhearted people saying, "Well, if we're going to change our risk criteria and we're going to change our audit expectations, how are we going to continue to be able to uphold our obligations around accountability?"

And while this conversation started probably similar to, at that depth, the same time that Mike began it in Pennsylvania and et cetera, is that after the energy that was inspired in our state around the Floyd homicide, our governor did an executive order and said, "It's time to lean into this equity, diversity stuff very, very seriously." And he challenged every department to go ahead and look at what our practices are and how we can do better.

And what that meant for us was, as a grant making, regulatory research agency, we had to look at things differently than just the direct line work that a lot of people do. That executive order gave us permission to challenge ourselves in terms of how we've always done business. And quite honestly, we still have a long way to go. We're still working even with what our grant management system looks like in terms of getting it so that it can accommodate some of the things that we need to do. I mean, there's technical barriers, et cetera.

But from where I sit, we were able to say, "This is not only a vision of us organizationally, but you won't be held negatively accountable if you think creatively because of the expectations that we have from the highest level of our organization." That gave the, I don't mean this in a pejorative term, but the rank and file, the people that do the real work, and the people at the top are starting to merge around what that vision might look like because of the way we relied on that executive order. Everybody had embraced this all along, but the question was, "Gee, are we going to get in trouble if we do something that a third party sees as inappropriate?" And for me, it kind of burst the dam a little bit and gave us the ability to move forward.

So that was one of the many challenges, but Delrice, when you mentioned kind of the move from on top and moving forward, it instantly came back to me about what a valuable tool that is when leadership can say that sort of thing, and leadership over an entire organization, not just a piece of it.

Latrina Kelly-James:

Thank you for that, Joe. And I love the idea of the merging of the top root, top and grassroots together to really create that shared and common ground. And knowing that there's challenges in it, but it coming from leadership at the top to help mitigate some of those challenges within the work. And being creative. And I think that's one of the, it wasn't in the key principles, but it is part of changing the bar, is how do we get creative about doing this work? And what creativity turns into is just normal process. Right? A normal process of being creative and that creativity is actually different approaches to the work.

I want to talk a little bit more about the challenges. And Lori, I want to put you on the spot because you shared about Iowa and the advanced payment process. And some of the things we heard within the last year in the NCJA equity process was this whole lowering the bar. And when you're allowing advanced payments, organizations that have more longer term in the state grants process, they've been grantees for years, sort of "lowering the bar" quote unquote, for-

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:09:04]

Latrina Kelly-James:

... Grantees for years, sort of "lowering the bar" for our newer organizations when you have certain processes around advanced payments. Were there any challenges around that advanced payment process as you all were sort of birthing it in your process?

Gillian Caplan:

So I came to this job in 2017, and this process was already in place. And as probably most you know, Janelle Melohn was my boss. And I would say that she put a lot of these processes in place, and was really instrumental in setting the culture for our organization to always consider inclusivity, and to consider folks that are not being included, and how can we always make sure that... well, bottom line, that we're reaching all of the victims in Iowa. And it always came back to what's the best way to reach and help victims? And one of the ways is to help fund the organizations that directly work with victims of color, work with victims whose language is not English, and to work with immigrants and refugees.

And I would have to say though that with the advances, one of the things that our fiscal team put in place with our risk assessment is that if you get an advance, you are a higher risk organization. And what does that mean to be a higher risk organization? I really don't like the terms that we use when we say "It's a high risk organization." I'm like high risk for what? What is the risk? And what it really means is that we just look at them a little more closely. It means that they probably are going to submit a little

more documentation than of what we call a low risk organization would do. But it also is instrumental in that to help us understand... or to get our whole team to understand that the CSPs that we fund just can't walk into a bank and get a line of credit. It is not that easy to do.

So I think it's worked out just fine. It's been quite a few years since we've been doing the advances, and our grantees understand it. Actually, we have fewer of our grantees getting advances than we did when I first started, because a lot of them have been working with other organizations, and have been striving to come up with other grant funds that help their organization. So that's it on... advances.

The other thing I would say is your challenge with advances, and if you want to do a different type of advance, you're going to have to convince your accountants and the people who know the money and the rules, and help them look at things in a different way, because I don't know if any of you are accountants, but accountants have a certain way of looking at the world that's maybe different than the people who are advocates on the ground doing the work, who have a way of saying, "Well, I think we can make this work if we try really hard to figure out a way to make it work," where your accountants are like, "This is black and white, and this is the way it is, period. We can't do anything differently." So you just have to show them, show them the rules, show them that it can work.

Latrina Kelly-James:

Excellent tip Laurie. Excellent tip. Because I think it's something to think about; who do we convince? Who do you have as your champions? And you don't often think about the fiscal managers and the finance departments as getting them on board, because it is critical, because it impacts their work on the back end, right?

Gillian Caplan:

Right.

Latrina Kelly-James:

I also heard you say advance equals high risk, and how you don't like the language around that. And so something for us to continuously think about is the language that we're using. And so I thank you for elevating that, because it does become a challenge and can become a barrier too for organizations when they hear, "Oh, now I'm going to be high risk because I don't have a certain level of resources or leverage resources at the time," at their entry points. So thank you for sharing that.

And we're low on time and I want to hear more about the challenges, but I want to ask all of you of a last question, and then we'll get into a short Q & A to give folks a chance to dig deeper in some of the things you all talked about. But if all of you can just share maybe two minutes, with all the challenges and your entry points to this equity work, what have been some of the successes so far, and what's been the impact on your grantees and your grantee relationships? And I'm going to give it to anyone who wants to start, and then we will kick it off to the next person.

Joe Thome:

I'll go Latrina. Thanks. Sorry, Mike. Both of those questions are kind of combined into a single thing, and that is we've had a significant crime prevention bill this year, and we incorporated a lot of the principles into those bills. We were able to convince the legislature to do upfront administrative payments to help small CBOs get started, allow us to be able to pay for our version of an institute like they have in Adams county using a not-for-profit, that sort of thing. And what it seems to have done is it has said to our community-based organizations, our smaller system agencies, "Maybe these guys do have our best interest in mind. Maybe they are finally listening." And we're getting closer to each other, the grassroots

organizations, and to use that pejorative term, "The man." And I think that over the next decade, we're going to be able to see something where we have a coordinated system of grant giving rather than one that's a top-down one, and lots of encouragement from across the field. So we're making progress.

Latrina Kelly-James:

Mike, do you want to go next?

Mike:

Sure. I think for everyone, while there's always room for improvement, we've gotten a lot of positive feedback from applicants, grantees and other stakeholders about our reforms to date. We've tried to provide a support along the way for groups, and really make adjustments where we can. I think including stakeholders in the adjustment process has made the overall grant process feel less intimidating to some grantees, strengthening the connection with the communities that we serve. I think grantees have been more comfortable sharing important insights, such as capacity limitations, and Latrina talked about trust. And I think that's a key area that I think we've gained some improvement, especially where we've incorporated some of these changes.

I think ultimately as a taxpayer-funded agency, there are some things that we just can't or shouldn't change. And I think Joe may have hinted on this, but we've really tried to balance the need for flexibility and the demand for accountability. That seems like a very tall order at times, I'm sure others can relate to it. But I think we've tried to do our best to make it work. And I think a big part of that process is trying to be as transparent. And I think this is a very important point. And I've talked to my staff about this is, being as transparent, as upfront as possible with groups that are applying for funds, so they understand what they might be signing up for and what our agency expects for grantees.

And to that end, earlier this month, I mentioned our TA project. We worked with our partners at WestEd enlist to develop and publish a new grant applicant readiness checklist tool. We're not requiring it, but we're strongly encouraging it for organization. It helps organizations determine whether they meet minimum qualifications, and/or recommend best practices necessary to successfully request and manage state and federal grants.

And you can access this checklist on our website at... I'll give it to you and if there's any issues, then you can follow up. But I think Gillian, or we could get something out there, but www.pccd.pa.gov. And all you've got to do is, because we have funding right out there right now for this particular program, is click on the green banner on our homepage and it will take you due to our resources on our gun violence grants and funding page. And that readiness checklist has two sections. It's organizational background, governance and structure, and then financial information and tax documents.

So if organizations know this upfront, they may determine that it makes more sense to partner with an organization who is able to meet the criteria. So it still gives them an opportunity, but it's really upfront. So regarding successes, I think one of the goals that I noted was to reach new community and grassroots organizations. And that was a priority from the start. We knew it would come with new challenges, but it was certainly worth it. And to try to give funding to neighborhoods and communities that are really doing the challenging work, and very important work at the community level.

So in our first announcement, we received 144 funding requests, and nearly half reported they never received a federal state grant before. On our next announcement, we received 340 requests, and over 50% had never received a federal state grant before. So we are pretty excited about that, and it's increasing access, increasing opportunities, and hopefully building some capacity to some degree as we incorporate the TA project. So we'll be tracking our progress through our TA project with number of

organizations served, reached and engaged, organizations reporting increased capacity and several other performance indicators. But those are just a few things where we're at right now.

Delrice Adams:

I'll jump in now Latrice, if you don't mind. So in terms of success, I think Joe spoke a little bit about it. It has really, I believe, increased our relationship building in community. If I'm being honest, I see the Illinois criminal justice information. We had a pretty bad wrap in community where people would say, "Oh no, we're not going to apply for those grants they're too hard," or, "They don't fund black and brown community. Historically, they fund other people." And leaning into equity work, we're not the experts. So we bring in those different voices, and have a lot of conversations about what's the barrier for people? Where's the burden for people? And we can make adjustments where there's low hanging fruit. And then we can look at systemic changes. We talk a lot about our procurement. For us, it's our grants Accountability and Transparency Act, which is a legislation that has us literally mirroring the federal rules.

And we can ask questions about those rules, like does it make us more risk adverse? Is it equitable? Is it fair and just, or is it just an oppressive mechanism to keep certain groups out? And maybe that was the intention then, but do we need a new intention now and questioning those things from a systemic level? So I would say a lot of the success is us being able to learn hand-in-hand with providers, but as a government entity being bold enough to question maybe the way we do things, and make changes where we can. But then also hold politicians, legislators accountable for making sure that they do things equitable in terms of distribution and community. And a lot of that has to do with the legislation for state entities binds us. It kind of holds our hands and limits the way that we can do the work.

The other piece that has been great in terms of the success is really looking at the data. So I saw in the chat, a couple of people ask questions like, "Oh, how do you sustain this if money dwindles?" When you really do the work through an equity lens, and you make a commitment to it, hopefully it would last beyond you. That's why it's so important to look at your policy and procedures and make those changes, so that you institutionalized diversity, inclusion. And so then, the funding will dwindle. I mean, we just know it's in ebbs and flows. But if you have good data and practices, and you intentionally... say, we have a process in our equity grant making where 50% of funding for our canvass revenue will go to organizations that are below a \$2 million cap. So we're intentionally saying majority of the organizations... I'm sorry, 75%, not 50%, majority of the organizations will be smaller localized organizations.

And the reason that being is our data shows us that they have the longest term impact. A lot of our bigger organizations do great campaign work. But when you look at individualized outcomes, these smaller organizations are able to really handle the higher risk cases in families and most vulnerable communities. And so being able to use our data to say this is a best practice, it is a best practice to really invest in these types of organizations, where historically we've been more about the risk of the funds. We haven't humanized the work in the sense that the priority has been, can we be assured that the money is being spent properly? And in that way, a bigger institution looks like the shiny object. But if we're thinking about impacting outcomes and saving people lives, and really reducing violence and those things that we say we want to do with these funds, then that makes us kind of look at the process and practices that we're doing in a different way. So that's been a success for Illinois, just really changing the narrative, and changing the bar, Latrina.

Latrina Kelly-James:

No, I appreciate that. And then something you just said, and then Laurie, I want you to close this out, but you just said something that, going back to the risk, that smaller individual organizations have better set up for better outcomes for the highest risk people and communities. And so it's a different lens of looking at what risk looks like, and approaching risk from a different perspective and not from this fiscal perspective. And the ideas we have around who is at risk from financial perspective versus what does risk look like in our communities, and who can provide and lower the risk, and better outcomes for our communities. So I just want to acknowledge that lens around risk that you just brought up Dalreece. And Laurie, if you want to close this out. Just share what have been some of the successes so far or impacts on grantees and grantee relationships?

Gillian Caplan:

Sure. Well, one of the things that we do is we set aside 10% of all of our victim services dollars combined. It's a formula that we have internally, that the state of Iowa decided was the best practice to set aside 10% to be funded just for CSPs. We've been doing that for a long time. We fund seven CSPs, comprehensive organizations that provide victim services. We also have vocal projects, which is a grant opportunity. When we had pleasant local money, we funded quite a few different projects in Iowa that focused on different needs that we came... whatever, like mental health needs, or legal advocacy. So they weren't comprehensive organizations, but they were projects.

And I would say that just recently too, we had a conversation with one of our... a couple of our coalitions and we were talking about the certification process that our advocates go through. And one of our CSPs said it doesn't do our advocates any good to sit through the sexual assault certification process because they don't understand it. The language isn't the same. So there's a lot of, even in our policies, the language that we use that say you have to have certain language in your policies. And then when we talk to our CSPs, they say, "But we don't have that word in our native language, but we have that concept." And is that okay? Yeah, sure. Yeah, it's okay, as long as the concept's the same. So you have to be open minded to say, well, this isn't the way it is in our rules, but we can change our rules a little bit. I'm all for bending rules as far as possible to make it work for everybody.

And going back to the certification process with the CSPs, we had a really nice conversation. And I guess maybe they didn't realize it; in their minds they said, no, it's so important for everybody to be certified as a social assault advocate, to which we said, but if they don't understand what you're telling them, it doesn't do any good. It just takes up a bunch of their time. So how about you take some of the funds that we've given you through another grant and you figure out a way to make that advocacy specific to them so that they can understand what the concepts of what sexual assault is and how they can address it with the victims that they work with.

Latrina Kelly-James:

Thank you, Laurie. I think that was such a great way to close this out, especially sharing about the barriers to language and understanding, and that the concept may be, we may not be doing the same thing, but the concept is the same, but the approach may be different. And so the barriers, just eliminating the barriers around cultural and social approaches to this work is critically important. So I want to thank you for just uplifting that, because that's a bulk of the work, is that equity work, it's changed. And it's also understanding that there are different approaches to the work, and honoring those values and approaches and historical and cultural ways of entering this as criminal justice work. So thank you.

Thank you to the panel. I think it's been a great conversation. We are out of time. Do not have time for questions, unfortunately. But if you do have questions, put them in the chat and I think NCJ will follow

up and get those questions answered. But thank you all for this great conversation and the work that you're all doing around equity, and really trying to push the needle on equity, becoming a practice and policy and standard across our work.

And with that, I will kick it over back to Chris to close us out.

Chris Asplen:

I was exactly right, that the only thing that we were going to lack was enough time. I want to thank Latrina for wonderful facilitation here, and Laurie and Joe and Mike and Dalreece. What a great conversation. Yeah, to just affirm what Latrina just said, if you have questions, put them in the chat, we will answer them and get them back to you. We will send you the recording. We will send you the materials. We will send you the contact information. And please do not hesitate to contact us at NCJA directly as well if you're interested in any of the equity work that we are doing, or if there's any questions that we can answer for you directly. Thank you everyone, most importantly, for you joining us and participating today. I wish you all the best in good health, and we will see you next time. Thanks everyone.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:30:01]