



MEMORANDUM

To: Galveston County Commissioners' Court
From: Betsy Thomas, Grants Administrator
Court Date: September 30, 2024
RE: District Attorney's Office
FY 2025 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Grant Award
Violence Against Women Prosecutor and Protective Order Attorney

BACKGROUND

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) offers grant programs to promote coordinated, multidisciplinary approaches to improving the criminal justice systems to respond to violent crimes against women, including domestic violence, commercial sex trafficking, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

Since 2009, Galveston County has operated a Violence Against Women Prosecutor Program through the District Attorney's Office. This program designates a specific prosecutor position to handle cases involving violence against women. Although this position is not the only prosecutor who handles this type of cases, the grant program provides the County an opportunity to have a position specifically for this type of case.

In 2017, Galveston County added a Violence Against Women Protective Order Attorney to elevate the three-month backlog. By adding this position, the County was able to expedite the process to obtain Protective Orders for Galveston County residents.

Congress allocates funding to each state for VAWA programs and the Office of the Governor's Public Safety Office – Criminal Justice Division administers the funds for the state. Funds are distributed to the local Councils of Government (COGs) such as the Houston-Galveston Council (HGAC) here in our region, who regulates the grant caps and prioritizes applications for funding recommendations through their Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (CJAC). The CJAC has raised the grant request cap from \$80,000 to \$150,000.



SUMMARY

The FY 2025 VAWA grant cycle had three major points to consider:

- For the FY 2025 VAWA grant cycle, The Office of the Governor requires each entity to apply for only one VAWA grant project. In the past, the County has submitted separate applications for the VAWA Prosecutor and the VAWA PO Attorney. The FY 2025 application will combine these two positions into one application, as required.
- There is also a national VAWA program funding reduction, which resulted in HGAC restricting FY 2025 applications to their 2024 awarded amounts (i.e., no increases). This presents a problem for the County because we are 1) required to combine our two VAWA grants into one and 2) keep our request at 2024 awarded amounts.
- For FY 2025 the HGAC CJAC has raised the grant request cap from \$80,000 to \$150,000, which is helpful in the year we must combine our two grants into one – but is precarious because we are instructed to not go above our 2024 grant requests.

For these reasons, staff met with HGAC personnel for technical assistance and recommends one, combined application with a 50/50 match resulting in a more competitive 2025 application for the CJAC review and scoring. Although the combined grant request is increased over the individual awarded amounts, it is significantly lower than both 2024 award amounts, which totaled \$198,877.11. Staff believes a straight 50/50 match showed simple good faith effort on the County's part and will hopefully result in 2025 funding for both positions.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Grant	Grant Amount	Match Amount	Total Project Cost
FY 2024 VAWA Prosecutor	\$99,284.50	\$42,550.50	\$141,835.00
FY 2024 PO Attorney	\$99,592.61	\$39,682.56	\$132,275.17
FY 2024 TOTALS	\$198,877.11	\$82,233.06	\$274,110.17
FY 2025 Combined VAWA Application	\$138,276.00	\$138,276.00	\$276,552.00

Although our FY 2025 total combined project cost is \$2,441.83 higher than last year, FY 2025 combined grant amount request is \$38,983.39 lower than our 2024 VAWA requests for both applications due to a 50% match from the County.

In future years, staff hopes to lower the match amount back down to the 30% - 35% range.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Professional Services requests the Court to consider acceptance of the FY 2025 VAWA grant award from the Office of the Governor's Public Safety Office – Criminal Justice Division.

ATTACHEMENTS FOR WET SIGNATURE

☐ None – Electronic Acceptance