

# 2016 Community Court Grant Program Competitive Solicitation

Announcement Date: January 6, 2016

## Overview

The U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance (“BJA”) and the Center for Court Innovation (the “Center”) are partnering to support the development and enhancement of community courts through BJA’s National Problem-Solving Justice Initiative.

The goal of the 2016 Community Court Grant Program is to provide financial and technical assistance to up to 10 local, state, and tribal jurisdictions in implementing or enhancing a community court. This solicitation offers two community court grant categories: **Category 1: Implementation**, and **Category 2: Enhancement**.

## Funding and Length of Awards

Up to 10 awards will be made. Grants will be up to \$200,000 each for a 24-month project period. The anticipated project timeline is June 1, 2016 – May 31, 2018.

## Deadline

Proposals are due by 5pm EST on Friday, February 19, 2016. Decisions about the award are expected to be announced in April 2016.

## Eligibility

Eligible applicants are limited to state and local public and private entities, including non-profit and for-profit organizations, and units of state and local government (including federally recognized Indian tribal governments as determined by the Secretary of the Interior). For-profit organizations must agree to forego any profit or management fee. All applicants must be eligible to receive grant funds from the Office of Justice Programs of the U.S. Department of Justice; funds under this program will be awarded through a subcontract with the Center.

## Program Description

### Program-Specific Information

Community courts are problem-solving courts that attempt to address the underlying issues that lead to criminal behavior and give justice system officials more meaningful options when handling lower-level

offenses. They seek to implement new, creative approaches to community engagement. They spread evidence-based practices, including the use of risk-needs assessment tools to link offenders to appropriate interventions. And they encourage the use of judicial monitoring to promote accountability and offer meaningful alternatives to incarceration.<sup>1</sup>

For the purposes of this solicitation, a community court is a neighborhood-focused court program that attempts to harness the power of the justice system to address local problems, including by linking offenders to drug treatment under judicial supervision. Projects eligible for funding under this solicitation may be based in a centralized courthouse or a stand-alone facility in the community served, as long as the model conforms to the key community court principles listed below. Community courts funded through this solicitation may use federal funding to serve only non-violent adult offenders.<sup>2</sup>

This solicitation offers two community court grant categories: Category 1: Implementation and Category 2: Enhancement.

**Category 1: Implementation. Grant maximum: \$200,000. Project period: 24 months.**

Implementation grants are available to jurisdictions that have initiated the preliminary stages of planning a community court and have obtained buy-in from key stakeholders (demonstrated by letters of understanding and commitment described in more detail below).

Applicants for Category 1 grants may propose to use funding for court operations, project management, resource coordination, offender supervision, case management, and social services such as drug treatment, individual and group counseling, job training and placement, housing placement assistance, primary and mental health care, and childcare.

**Category 2: Enhancement. Grant maximum: \$200,000. Project period: 24 months.**

Enhancement grants are available to jurisdictions with a fully operational community court. To be eligible, the community court must have been operating for at least three months as of January 1, 2016. Applicants for Category 2 grants must also have buy-in from key stakeholders for the enhancement project (demonstrated by letters of understanding and commitment described in more detail below).

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on community courts, visit <http://www.courtinnovation.org/topic/community-court>.

<sup>2</sup> Programs may not use funding under this solicitation to serve violent offenders. As defined in 42 U.S.C. 3797u-2, a “violent offender” means a person who—(1) is charged with or convicted of an offense that is punishable by a term of imprisonment exceeding one year, during the course of which offense or conduct— (A) the person carried, possessed, or used a firearm or dangerous weapon; (B) there occurred the death of or serious bodily injury to any person; or (C) there occurred the use of force against the person of another, without regard to whether any of the circumstances described in subparagraph (A) or (B) is an element of the offense or conduct of which or for which the person is charged or convicted; or (2) has 1 or more prior convictions for a felony crime of violence involving the use or attempted use of force against a person with the intent to cause death or serious bodily harm. A community court funded under the 2016 Community Court Grant Program may, at its own discretion and after taking a valid assessment of risk into consideration, choose to provide services to an offender who is otherwise excluded from this program if the grantee is using non-federal funding to provide the services to that offender. BJA strongly encourages the use of valid risk assessment instruments and consideration of public safety needs in this local decision making process.

Applicants for Category 2 grants may propose to use funding to address one or more of the following: 1) expand the number of participants served that meet the existing target population description (for example, through the expansion of the geographic area served); 2) expand the eligible target population and serve additional participants who meet the expanded description (for example, through the addition of new eligible charges); 3) enhance project operations through the permitted use of funds described in Category 1.

### Community Court Common Principles

Community courts can take many forms, but all focus on creative partnerships and problem-solving. Community courts employ the following common principles:

#### **1. Enhanced Information**

Community courts are dedicated to the idea that better staff training combined with better information (about litigants, victims, and the community context of crime) can help improve the decision making of judges, attorneys, and other justice officials. The goal is to help practitioners make more nuanced decisions about individual defendants, ensuring that they receive an appropriate level of supervision and services.

#### **2. Community Engagement**

Community courts recognize that citizens, merchants and neighborhood groups have an important role to play in helping the justice system identify, prioritize and solve local problems. By actively engaging citizens in the process, community courts seek to improve public trust in justice.

#### **3. Collaboration**

Community courts engage a diverse range of people, government agencies, and community organizations in collaborative efforts to improve public safety. By bringing together justice players and reaching out to potential partners beyond the courthouse (e.g., drug treatment and other social service providers, victims groups, schools), community courts improve inter-agency communication, encourage greater trust between citizens and government, and foster new responses to local problems.

#### **4. Individualized Justice**

By using evidence-based risk and needs assessment instruments, community courts seek to link offenders to individually tailored community-based services (e.g., drug treatment, job training, safety planning, mental health counseling) where appropriate. In doing so (and by treating defendants with dignity and respect), community courts help reduce the use of incarceration and recidivism, improve community safety, and enhance confidence in justice. Linking offenders to services can also aid victims, improving their safety and helping restore their lives.

## 5. Accountability

Community courts send the message that all criminal behavior—even low-level “quality-of-life” crime—has an impact on community safety. By promoting community restitution and insisting on regular and rigorous compliance monitoring (including by the judge)—and clear consequences for non-compliance—community courts seek to improve the accountability of offenders.

## 6. Outcomes

Community courts emphasize the active and ongoing collection and analysis of data—measuring outcomes and process, costs and benefits. Dissemination of this information is a valuable symbol of public accountability.

### Project Activities

The Center for Court Innovation seeks proposals from jurisdictions interested in creating or enhancing a community court. The Center will provide funding and targeted technical assistance to the selected jurisdictions. Technical assistance activities will include hosting structured peer-to-peer site visits at an exemplary community court;<sup>3</sup> helping to develop a realistic and achievable action plan that clearly articulates goals, objectives, action items, and expected deadlines; providing remote and on-site intensive technical assistance based on the project action plan; and assisting with project implementation and sustainability.

### All selected jurisdictions will be required to complete the following activities:

- Identify a lead planner who will be responsible for overseeing all activities for the project and serving as the primary liaison with Center staff;
- If not already in place, convene a steering committee of representatives from relevant agencies, including the court, prosecuting agency, defense bar, law enforcement, and probation agency (if applicable);
- Conduct a needs assessment with assistance from the Center;
- Facilitate at least one site visit from Center and BJA staff to the jurisdiction;
- Participate in a peer-to-peer site visit to an exemplary community court;
- Attend a national community justice training hosted by the Center and BJA;
- Create a project implementation plan and identify performance measures;
- Participate in planning meetings, telephone conversations, and emails with Center staff on a periodic basis;
- Work towards applying the community court common principles—enhanced information, community engagement, collaboration, individualized justice, accountability, and outcomes—in the planning and execution of the project;
- Implement an evidence-based short screener and/or comprehensive risk-need assessment tool;
- Document the policies, procedures, and organizational structure of the community court; and

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<sup>3</sup> Exemplary community courts may be one of the four [Mentor Community Courts](#)—located in Dallas, TX; Hartford, CT; Orange County, CA; and San Francisco, CA—or one of the Center’s community courts in New York City.

- Collect data and other information that is required by the Center and BJA and report that information to the Center on a quarterly basis.

Additionally, all grantees must be willing to collaborate with a researcher, to be engaged at a later date by BJA. Researchers will be funded through a separate grant.

## Application Instructions

Completed applications should be sent by email to Katherine Cassirer at [cassirerk@courtinnovation.org](mailto:cassirerk@courtinnovation.org), with the subject line: 2016 Community Court Grant Application: [Jurisdiction Name].

Alternatively, proposals may be sent by certified mail to:

Center for Court Innovation, ATTN: Katherine Cassirer  
520 Eighth Ave., 18<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, NY 10018

Mailed applications must be postmarked by the submission deadline. If an applicant mails a hard copy of the proposal, the applicant must notify the Center before the deadline to that effect (by email to [cassirerk@courtinnovation.org](mailto:cassirerk@courtinnovation.org) or voicemail at 646-386-4155).

A completed application must include the following, marked clearly as separate attachments:

- Section I. Application Form
- Section II. Time/Task Plan
- Section III. Program Narrative
- Section IV. Letters of Understanding and Commitment from Key Stakeholders
- Section V. Budget Detail Worksheet and Budget Narrative
- Additional Requirements, if applicable (see p. 9)

### I. Application Form

All applicants must complete the attached application form.

### II. Time/Task Plan

All applicants must complete a Time/Task Plan. A template is attached for your use or you may create and use your own format. The Time/Task Plan should define the project's objectives and corresponding activities and outline the responsible agencies and/or individuals and expected timeframe to accomplish each activity.

### III. Program Narrative

Applicants must include a program narrative that includes the sections described below. The program narrative should be double spaced, using 12-point Times Roman font with 1-inch margins, and should not exceed 12 pages. Category 1 and Category 2 applicants should tailor responses to each section accordingly.

### **a. Statement of the Problem**

- Identify the geographic area to be served by the proposed project and describe the nature and scope of the problems the project would seek to address. Also explain how the local court system has addressed these challenges historically and what gaps currently exist. Use data if available to help define the problem.

### **b. Project Design and Implementation**

- Describe the specific goals and objectives of the project, linking the discussion to the community court common principles described above.
- Describe the planning process to be followed and how the community will be involved.
- Describe the tentative program design of the project. Please address the following:
  - Estimated caseload and the number of individuals to be served
  - Eligibility requirements (including range of criminal charges)
  - Point(s) at which cases will be eligible for the community court (for example: pre-plea, post-plea and pre-sentence, part of a probationary sentence or in lieu of probation revocation, etc.)
  - Range of interventions to be provided to address participants' issues, including problematic drug use
  - Community service or other restitution projects
  - Role of the community
  - Screening and referral process
  - Use of assessment tools
  - Case management process
  - Judicial supervision
  - Incentives and sanctions
  - Requirements for program completion
  - Legal or other dispositions for program completion (e.g., dismissal, reduced charge)

### **c. Capabilities and Competencies**

- Identify the members of the project's core team (i.e., staff responsible for carrying out project activities) and briefly describe their roles, responsibilities, and qualifications.<sup>4</sup> Applicants may attach resumes or CVs as supplemental material.
- Describe how core team members will ensure effective communication and coordination among the members.
- Describe the project's key organizational partners and their roles, capabilities, and competencies, including their participation in planning and/or operating any existing

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<sup>4</sup> Core community court team members must include a judge, court administrator, prosecutor, and defense attorney; the team may include other partners, such as a treatment provider and community supervision representative. If possible, the team should also include a data collection specialist.

problem-solving court program(s). Partners should include the project's proposed treatment and other social services partners. Also describe the history of these partnerships and how the quality and effectiveness of service delivery will be monitored.

#### **d. Plan for Data Collection and Sustainability**

- Describe the steps the jurisdiction will take to develop a performance management and evaluation plan. The plan should include strategies to collect data, review data, and use data to improve program performance.
- Identify who will be responsible for the required quarterly collection of data. The specific data required may include # of screenings, # of referrals to community court, # of active participants, # of community service hours performed, # of successfully completed treatment mandates, and # of community engagement activities.
- Describe how operations will be maintained after the 2016 Community Court Grant Program ends and how current collaborations will be used to leverage ongoing resources.

#### **IV. Letters of Understanding and Commitment**

Applicants should include Letters of Understanding and Commitment from key stakeholders in the jurisdiction. Letters must be submitted from the following:

- Chief judge of the court where the project is located
- Chief public defender or equivalent
- Chief prosecutor

Letters from other stakeholders are permissible but not required.

Each letter should clearly demonstrate commitment to support the project and to work as part of a collaborative team in these efforts. Letters should be addressed to Denise E. O'Donnell, Director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, 810 Seventh Street NW, Washington, DC 20531. The letters should be compiled as a separate attachment and will not count towards the page allocation of the program narrative.

#### **V. Budget Detail Worksheet and Budget Narrative**

Each application should include a Budget Detail Worksheet and a budget narrative. The budget attachments do not count towards the page allocation of the program narrative.

##### **Budget Detail Worksheet**

A sample Budget Detail Worksheet can be found at

<http://ojp.gov/funding/Apply/Resources/BudgetDetailWorksheet.pdf>.

Applicants that submit their budget in a different format should include the budget categories listed in the sample budget worksheet. For questions pertaining to budget and examples of allowable and unallowable costs, see the OJP Financial Guide at [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/financialguide/index.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/financialguide/index.htm).

The two-year budget should show how the funds will be used to meet the project goals and activities listed above, including participating in a peer-to-peer site visit and attending a national community justice training.

The Center for Court Innovation reserves the right to modify the amount for which applicants are eligible to apply if grant award amounts received by the Center are different than anticipated.

### Budget Narrative

The budget narrative should thoroughly and clearly describe every category of expense listed in the Budget Detail Worksheet. Proposed budgets should be complete, cost effective, and allowable (e.g., reasonable, allocable, and necessary for project activities). Applicants should demonstrate in their budget narratives how they will maximize cost effectiveness of grant expenditures. Budget narratives should generally describe cost effectiveness in relation to potential alternatives and the goals of the project. For example, a budget narrative should detail why planned in-person meetings are necessary, or how technology and collaboration with outside organizations might be used to reduce costs without compromising quality.

The narrative should be mathematically sound and correspond with the information and figures provided in the Budget Detail Worksheet. The narrative should explain how the applicant estimated and calculated all costs, and how they are relevant to the completion of the project. The narrative may include tables for clarification purposes but need not be in a spreadsheet format. As with the Budget Detail Worksheet, the budget narrative should be broken down by year.

## **Selection Process**

The Center and BJA are committed to ensuring a fair and open process for awarding funds. Applications will be reviewed and scored by Center staff and peer reviewers, with final review and approval by BJA.

Applicants will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Statement of the problem (20%)
2. Project design and implementation plan (20%)
3. Capabilities and competencies (20%)
4. Data collection and sustainability plan (10%)
5. Letters of Understanding and Commitment from Key Stakeholders (20%)
6. Budget (10%)

In addition to these criteria, considerations for award recommendations and decisions may include, but are not limited to, underserved populations, geographic diversity, strategic priorities, past performance, and available funding.

## **Additional Requirements**

### Applicable Federal Laws and Regulations

All awards are subject to the availability of appropriated funds and to any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law. Applicants selected for awards must agree to comply with



additional legal requirements upon acceptance of an award. Additional information for each requirement can be found at [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/funding/other\\_requirements.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/funding/other_requirements.htm).

#### Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)

Indirect costs are allowed only if the applicant has a federally approved indirect cost rate. (This requirement does not apply to units of local government.) Attach a copy of the federally approved indirect cost rate agreement to the application. Applicants that do not have an approved rate may request one through their cognizant federal agency, which will review all documentation and approve a rate for the applicant organization, or, if the applicant's accounting system permits, costs may be allocated in the direct cost categories. For assistance with identifying your cognizant agency, please contact the Customer Service Center at 1-800-458-0786 or at [ask.ocfo@usdoj.gov](mailto:ask.ocfo@usdoj.gov). If the Department of Justice is the cognizant federal agency, applicants may obtain information needed to submit an indirect cost rate proposal at [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/funding/pdfs/indirect\\_costs.pdf](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/funding/pdfs/indirect_costs.pdf).

#### Tribal Authorizing Resolution (if applicable)

Tribes, tribal organizations, or third parties proposing to provide direct services or assistance to residents on tribal lands should include in their applications a resolution, a letter, affidavit or other documentation, as appropriate, that certifies that the applicant has the legal authority from the tribe(s) to implement the proposed project on tribal lands. In those instances when an organization or consortium of tribes applies for a grant on behalf of a tribe or multiple specific tribes, the application should include appropriate legal documentation, as described above, from all tribes that would receive services or assistance under the grant. A consortium of tribes for which existing consortium bylaws allow action without support from all tribes in the consortium (i.e., without an authorizing resolution or comparable legal documentation from each tribal governing body) may submit, instead, a copy of its consortium bylaws with the application.

#### Accounting System and Financial Capability Questionnaire (if applicable)

Any applicant (other than an individual) that is a non-governmental entity and that has not received any award from OJP within the past 3 years must download, complete, and submit this form: <http://ojp.gov/funding/Apply/Resources/FinancialCapability.pdf>.

## Contact Information

For assistance with any requirement of this solicitation, please contact Katherine Cassirer at [cassirerk@courtinnovation.org](mailto:cassirerk@courtinnovation.org).

An electronic version of this solicitation is available at [www.courtinnovation.org/2016-community-court-grant-program](http://www.courtinnovation.org/2016-community-court-grant-program).

# 2016 Community Court Grant Program Application Form

1. Applying for: (Check one)
- Category 1: Implementation
  - Category 2: Enhancement

2. Name of applicant agency:

3. Name of court in which the project would be situated (e.g. Adams County District Court):

4. Point of contact for application process:

5. Title:

6. Organization:

7. Email address:

8. Phone number:

9. Mailing address:

10. Financial point of contact (if different):

Name:

Title:

Organization:

Email address:

Phone number:

Mailing address:

11. Is the applicant agency currently a recipient of any federal grant funds? If so, please describe.

12. Does the applicant agency currently have any pending applications for federally funded grants or subgrants (including cooperative agreements) that include requests for funding to support the project being proposed under this solicitation and will cover the identical cost items outlined in the budget narrative and worksheet in the application under this solicitation? If so, please complete the chart below. If additional space is required, please attach a separate document and indicate below.

Federal or State Funding Agency	Solicitation Name/Project Name	Name/Phone/E-mail for Point of Contact at Funding Agency

