

Heart of Texas Council of Governments Criminal Justice Advisory Committee Scoring & Operating Procedures

OVERVIEW

The Heart of Texas Council of Governments (HOTCOG) covers a six-county region that includes: Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill, Limestone, and McLennan. The goal of HOTCOG is to encourage cooperation by local governments in order to maintain a high level of health, safety, and general welfare of the residents in the region.

The Criminal Justice Division (CJD) of the Office of the Governor provides seed money and grant support to Texas communities and statewide programs with the goals of improving the criminal and juvenile justice systems, decreasing crime, and helping crime victims. CJD administers state and federally funded programs including the General Victim Assistance-Direct Services Programs, Violent Crimes Against Women Criminal Justice and Training Projects – Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Dating Violence, and Stalking, Criminal Justice Programs, and General Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Programs. The focus of most of these funds is to provide seed money to communities that are part of a collaborative planning process in their area. HOTCOG assists in this effort by coordinating the regional planning process and providing assistance to the local community planning groups.

The Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (CJAC) is a requirement of the planning funds HOTCOG receives from CJD. The CJAC is composed of multidisciplinary representatives from all six counties. The major responsibilities of the CJAC include participation in the development of the annual regional criminal justice plan and recommendation of funding priorities for the annual grant program. The CJAC develops scoring and operating procedures that establish eligibility requirements and provide an overview of the application and scoring process. The CJAC evaluates each funding proposal to determine their consistency with applicable community plans and makes these recommendations to the HOTCOG Executive Committee.

These Scoring and Operating Procedures are established for the review and scoring of applications for CJD funds. The CJAC will review and score all such applications within its region.

PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE CJAC

Support Staff The Heart of Texas Council of Governments' Criminal Justice Planner is designated as the support staff for the Heart of Texas Criminal Justice Advisory Committee. Questions on the Heart of Texas CJAC or these scoring and operating procedures should be addressed to:

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Heart of Texas Council of Governments
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Notice of Meetings Notices of the meeting shall meet the requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act. Notices of any special called meetings or

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emergency meetings shall meet the requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act.

Notification of RFAs Information regarding Requests for Applications (RFAs) provided by the staff of the Criminal Justice Division of the Governor's Office (CJD) will be distributed by HOTCOG to potential applicants through news releases or other forms of correspondence (letter, memorandum, email, or facsimile). All solicitation information is posted on the CJD eGrants website <https://cjdonline.governor.state.tx.us>. Information specific to the HOTCOG region may be found at <http://hotcog.org/criminaljustice.html>.

Community Planning Updated Community Plans covering at a minimum a county level will be required. Projects must meet a need identified within the Community Plan covering their county. Although not a part of the official application packet, a Community Plan Eligibility Form will be required for every project competing within the HOTCOG region. A Community Plan Eligibility Form is attached for reference (page 7).

Grant Application Workshop It is mandatory for all applicants seeking funding from the Criminal Justice Division to attend a HOTCOG grant application workshop. If it is impossible for the applicant to attend a grant application workshop, a one-on-one grant application training session can be scheduled at the convenience of the HOTCOG Criminal Justice Planner.

Potential applicants may receive copies of the CJAC Scoring and Operating Procedures and application review instrument upon request to HOTCOG. Applications will be available through the CJD website <https://cjdonline.governor.state.tx.us>.

Technical Assistance Current or potential grantees may request a personal or telephone technical assistance visit with the Criminal Justice Planner before applying for grant funding.

HOTCOG will conduct a post-award grant management workshop to provide technical assistance to CJD awarded grantees. This workshop should be attended by all first year grantees.

Quorum Requirements A meeting of the CJAC requires a quorum of a simple majority of all current members.

Application Review Process Pertinent pages of grant applications will be mailed to CJAC members before the scoring/prioritization meeting.

The CJAC requests that continuation applicants be prepared to

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address their progress on previous grant years at the CJAC scoring meeting.

Prior to scoring applications, HOTCOG will contact current grantees delinquent in submitting financial and progress reports and provide the CJAC with a list of grantees that were contacted and remain delinquent. A grant application may be disqualified by CJD from the grant application process if a grant agency is on a vendor hold status with CJD at the time the application is scored by the CJAC.

Applicant Contact

Any form of inappropriate communication between a committee member and an applicant agency's representative, employee, or contractor in which the application or the scoring of the application is discussed is prohibited. Such inappropriate communication should immediately be reported to the COG Criminal Justice Planner. Such inappropriate communication may result in an applicant agency being ineligible for future funding consideration. Committee members found to have engaged in such inappropriate communication may be removed from the committee.

Attendance at Scoring/Prioritization Meetings

To be considered for funding, a representative of the project will be required to attend the scoring meeting.

In order to score/prioritize applications, a CJAC member must be present for the presentations of all applications. Committee members who are not present during all of the applicant presentations will not be allowed to score any of the applications.

CJAC members and the HOTCOG CJ Planner are not eligible to make presentations to the committee for their agency's applications.

Scoring

Applicants will be randomly selected by HOTCOG staff to determine the order of presentations. All applicants will be notified of the order of presentations and general time schedule established for the scoring meeting. Applicants should be available at least 30 minutes prior to their scheduled presentation.

It is the applicants' option to make a presentation on their grant application. However, if a presentation is made, the Chair will determine time limits for the presentation and follow-up questions based upon the number of applications received. Following the initial presentation, the floor may be yielded to other presenters on behalf of the application to complete the allotted time.

Each application will be assigned scores by appointed members during the scoring meeting. Committee members may take notes on sample ballots prior to the meeting and during presentations, but final scores must be assigned on individually signed ballots after all presentations are made. No consensus scoring of projects will be

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allowed. Each member must score projects individually. The standard scoring instrument is attached for reference (page 8).

Scores from all CJAC members eligible to score will be averaged to determine the final score. Final scores will be calculated and reported on less than full point intervals (i.e., using decimal points) in order to reduce the chance of ties between applicants. Project priorities will be obtained as a result of the final scores. Scores are open to the public.

HOTCOG will notify applicants of grant priorities in writing within one calendar day of the decision by the CJAC.

The notice must state:

“Pursuant to the provisions of the Texas Administrative Code, after the CJAC prioritizes the grant applications and the COG’s governing body approves the priority listings, the COG submits the written priority listing to CJD. Based upon the COGs priority listing, CJD will verify the eligibility, reasonableness and cost-effectiveness strategy of the proposed project, and the availability of funding, and will render final funding decisions on these grant applications. The COG will notify grantees of any changes in the funding recommendations.”

Tie Policy In the event of a tie, the following procedures will be utilized :

1. Applications of continuous projects shall take priority and shall be based on length of years funded.
2. If still tied: Staff shall remove the lowest score from the applications that result in a tie and re-average the remaining scores. This process shall be repeated, continuing to remove the lowest score until the tie is broken.

The scores resulting from a tie breaking process will only be used for the purpose of breaking a tie. Under no circumstances will these tie breaking scores be used to change any other rankings in the prioritization process.

The CJAC shall be notified of the tie and the revised results.

Conflict of Interest The COG governing body, CJAC members, and COG staff must abstain from reviewing, voting, commenting or taking any action on any grant application, other than a grant application submitted by a COG, during the prioritization process if they or an individual related within the third degree by consanguinity or within the second degree by affinity:

- is employed by the applicant agency and works for the unit or division that would administer the grant, if awarded
- serves on any board that oversees the unit or division that would administer the grant, if awarded
- owns or controls any interest in a business entity or other non-governmental organization that benefits, directly or indirectly, from activities with the applicant agency

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- receives any funds from the applicant agency as a result of the grant, if awarded
- uses or receives a substantial amount of tangible goods, services or funds from the applicant agency.

If a member must abstain from reviewing, voting, commenting or taking any action on any grant application, the member must also abstain from reviewing, voting, commenting or taking an action on any competing grant applications within that program area during the prioritization process.

Appeals Each applicant will be allowed to utilize the following appeal procedure when actions of the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee are questioned. All appeals must be based on a specific, identified error and not on factors that allow discretion.

All appeals must be handled in accordance with the following procedural guidelines:

1. An applicant must notify the Executive Director of the Heart of Texas Council of Governments in writing of the alleged, specific violation within two working days following the notification of scoring results.
2. The appeal will be considered along with the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee's recommendations to the Heart of Texas Council of Governments' Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will make the final decision regarding funding and submit its recommendations to the Governor's Office. The appellant will be given written findings concerning the Executive Committees' action.

APPENDIX

Application Submission Deadlines

Application submission deadlines will be announced each year for the grant programs listed below by the Criminal Justice Division (CJD) of the Governor's Office and posted on the CJD Web site at <https://cjdonline.governor.state.tx.us>.

- General Victim Assistance-Direct Services Programs,
- Violent Crimes Against Women Criminal Justice and Training Projects – Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Dating Violence, and Stalking,
- Criminal Justice Programs, and
- General Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Programs

Applications will be submitted directly to CJD for the upcoming funding year.

Application Workshop

HOTCOG will host an application workshop for the General Victim Assistance-Direct Services Programs, Violent Crimes Against Women Criminal Justice and Training Projects – Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Dating Violence, and Stalking, Criminal Justice Programs, and General Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Programs.. All potential applicants are required to attend or schedule a one on one conference with HOTCOG staff. Further information on this workshop will be provided in correspondence and posted on the www.hotcog.org website.

Additional Information Requested

Each applicant is required to complete a community plan eligibility form and submit it with the application to HOTCOG. A copy of this form is attached (page 7).

Application Review Instrument

A copy of the application review instrument that will be utilized by the CJAC members to score each application is attached (page 8).

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APPLICATION REVIEW INSTRUMENT

APPLICANT: _____

FUNDING SOURCE: _____

Each grant application will be reviewed and scored based on the following factors. The total score will be used to establish a rank order upon which funding recommendations will be based. Please note that most criteria have a range of points that can be assigned according to the discretion and judgment of each committee member.

SCORE

Documentation of Problem

- 1. Is the problem identified and supported by locally relevant statistical evidence? (0 -10 points) _____
- 2. Does this project fill an identified gap in services and address needs that are not now being met or serve as a current resource filling a gap in service that would result if the project did not exist? (0 – 10 points) _____

Soundness of Proposed Strategy

- 1. Does this project address the stated problem and are project goals realistic and attainable? (0 – 10 points) _____
- 2. Does the project plan clearly and accurately describe activities to be conducted? (0 – 10 points) _____
- 3. Are project costs realistic when compared to project goals? (0 – 10 points) _____
- 4. Does this project application document a joint effort or formal cooperation with other agencies through written agreements or contracts? (0 – 10 points) _____

Evaluation Design

- 1. Does this proposal provide a sound plan for collecting data for measuring performance and outcome? (0 – 10 points) _____

New Projects Only

- 1. Does this program avoid duplication or overlapping of existing programs? (0 – 10 points) _____

Continuation Projects Only

- 1. Has the project successfully impacted the stated problem in previous funding periods? (0 – 10 points) _____

Vendor Hold

- 1. 10 points will be deducted if the applicant is currently on Vendor Hold with CJD. *CJD may disqualify an applicant on Vendor Hold.* _____

TOTAL _____

SIGNATURE: _____