

# 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 Office of the Governor Criminal Justice Division (CJD) 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 process whereby the HOTCOG Region receives funding 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 with direction from CJD develops scoring and operating procedures that establish eligibility requirements and provide an overview of the application and scoring process. The CJAC evaluates each grant application to determine its consistency with the applicable community plans' priorities then makes recommendations to the HOTCOG Executive Committee.

## 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 regarding the Heart of Texas CJAC or these scoring and operating procedures should be addressed to:

Lana Gudgel, Criminal Justice Planner  
Heart of Texas Council of Governments  
1514 S. New Road  
Waco, Texas 76711  
254.292.1891 (office) 254.315.3322 (cell) 254.756.0102 (fax)  
[lane.gudgel@hot.cog.tx.us](mailto:lane.gudgel@hot.cog.tx.us)

**Notice of Meetings** Notices of the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee meetings shall meet the requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act.

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

**Community Planning** Community Plans for each county are required. Projects/applications must address a need identified within the county's community plan. Although not a part of the official application packet, a Community Plan Eligibility Form is required for every project competing within the HOTCOG Region. A Community Plan Eligibility Form is included in this document, see page 7. The CJAC members will review these forms when determining the relevance of each project to assure it is in line with the Region's priorities.

**Grant Application Workshop** It is mandatory for all applicants seeking funding from CJD to attend a HOTCOG grant application workshop in person each year. If it is not possible for the applicant to attend a grant application workshop, a one-on-one grant application training session will be scheduled at the convenience of the HOTCOG Criminal Justice Planner.

Applicants will have access to the CJAC Scoring and Operating Procedures and application review instrument/scoring document. RFAs and other information specific to the HOTCOG Region may be found at <http://www.hotcog.org>.

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.

**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 sent to CJAC members for review before the scoring/prioritization meeting.

The CJAC requests that continuation applicants be prepared to address their progress on previous grant years at the CJAC scoring meeting.

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Prior to scoring applications, HOTCOG will contact current grantees delinquent in submitting financial and progress reports (placed on **Vendor Hold**) 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.

It is the applicants' option to make a presentation on their grant application. 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.

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.

### ***Scoring***

Only committee members who are present during all of the applicant presentations in a particular funding category will be allowed to score any of the applications in that funding category.

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

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. No consensus scoring of projects will be allowed. Each member must score projects individually. Examples of scoring instruments begin on page 8, for reference.

Scores from all CJAC members eligible to score will be averaged to

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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 applicants 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
- 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.

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### ***Appeals***

CJAC members must recuse themselves from any application where they have a conflict. Members that have recused themselves will be allowed to score other applications in the same category. Members that have recused themselves are not required to leave the room during the presentation. Those members will be required to abstain from commenting or interfering with the presentation of any of the presenters in the category including the presentation for which they have recused themselves.

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 Office of the Governor Criminal Justice Division. The appellant will be given written findings concerning the Executive Committees' decision.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Application Submission Deadlines**

Application submission deadlines will be announced each year for the grant programs listed below by the Office of the Governor 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](http://www.hotcog.org) website.

### **Additional Information Requested**

Each applicant is required to complete a Community Plan Eligibility Form and submit it to HOTCOG when they submit their application to CJD. The Community Plan Eligibility Form is attached (page 7).

### **Application Review Instrument**

A sample(s) of the application review instrument that will be utilized by the CJAC members to score each application follows the Community Plan Eligibility Form.

**COMMUNITY PLAN ELIGIBILITY FORM**

Note: This form is to be submitted to HOTCOG via fax or email.

1. Name the plan(s) and last revision date(s) under which the applicant is submitting this application:

*Example: Bosque County Community Plan, revised 11.30.13*

2. List the cities, counties, or parts thereof covered by the plan(s) referenced under question one above:

3. If a continuation application, quote the reference in the plan(s) that mentions the focus of this application as a priority, and the needs it addresses:

4. If a new application, list the gap(s) in services or needs listed in the plan(s) that this application would help to fill or address:

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*Sample scoresheets will be inserted here.*