

Funding Plan Update for Grantees.9.14.23

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All right. Well, thank you everybody for joining us, we did want to start talking with everybody because I know people have been hearing different things about the funding and where things are at and what to anticipate. And so this is sort of that first session where we can give you a little bit more information. And so I'm going to start sharing my screen.

We will go through everything and leave some time for questions as well. And see where we go from there. So thank you all for joining. Obviously, we're going to talk to you about some of our funding updates and make sure you know where everything's at. We're going to walk through what we're anticipating for Calendar Year 25. And what's kind of coming up with that, and then spend some time answering your questions, because I imagine that you're going to have a number of questions as we kind of go through all of this.

So we wanted to give you some updates about the various funding sources. Right now what we know is VAWA is relatively stable, our awards are continuing to be about the same as they have been in the past. VAWA was no longer taken out of what used to come off the top of the VOCA funding. And so we haven't heard anything different about VAWA. The recommendations in Congress are to have it similar as it has been in the past, which has been a couple million that we've been able to announce each year. Regarding SASP, it can go up slightly, or it can go down slightly, but we're not expecting anything significant. As all of you know, in these past few funding sessions and legislative sessions, we've had American Rescue Plan Act funding or ARPA funding, which is not funding that is anticipated to be given out in the future. We had a couple of bills that did that, but basically everything that's given out in ARPA has to be obligated by the end of calendar year 2024. So what we've received in ARPA is all that we're anticipating.

We have received a couple rounds of general fund dollars that were one-time allocations. So starting back fiscal year legislative session 21, fiscal year 22, and 23, a little bit of general fund dollars were allocated, but we have no guarantee that there's going to be any additional general fund dollars. And I'll talk a little bit more about that in a little bit.

And what we do know, which is what everybody may have been seeing in alerts and questions is that we know that the VOCA fund is continuing to decrease. And that is our largest funding source for all of you through the Crime Victim Services funding. State VALE wasn't on my chart, but State VALE as you know, is separate from our other funding process. We've had cuts across State VALE every year. Meghan, and our budget person have been continuing to look for money in that and we're starting to

rebuild that fund a little. So we might be able to announce a little bit more in the State VALE funding process than we have in the previous years. But that is definitely something that we are finalizing that final number and Meghan will be sending out that announcement and that will launch in November.

But we really want to talk to you a lot about VOCA. So Lindsay and I were recently at the federal conference regarding VOCA and we received more news that we kind of were not expecting to have. And so we have been talking with everybody about the VOCA fund. And this gives you a picture (VOCA funding award graph displayed) of what we've seen over the years. We saw that high peak in 2018. And then we've seen these steady decreases down through 2021, a little bit of peak in 22, and 23. But while we were at conference, they actually talked to us about expecting another 41% decrease in the amount of funding available to each state for VOCA and it was a huge, unexpected shock that I think Lindsay and I while we were at conference that we weren't expecting to hear. But what that means is what we actually get in our 24 award is we will receive \$13.8 million dollars approximately, on top of that 45 to 50% decrease we were talking about for funding. Now that won't translate into like an 80% cut for everybody.

As most of you know, when we are working to do our funding processes, we keep several pots of money open at one time. And so we have a little bit in reserve for each year. Other states spend one award as they get one award. So those states who just awarded their 23 award will now do a 41% decrease again. But we do want you to know that that is happening and what that kind of looks like for everybody and talk through a little bit of what that means for all of you as grantees. We do know that there are certainly conversations happening at the national level about how to fix the VOCA fund. It's not something the Office for Victims of Crime by themselves can go in and just say to Congress, "We need more money." It's really individuals around and other national organizations trying to say that they need a solution. So in 2019, when there was a VOCA fix that we talked about, there is now additional money going into that fund. That was a fix that took about four years with bipartisan support and lobbying from lots of different agencies across the country to finally get that to happen. There's nothing right now, that is a definite plan that's happening, and it's nothing that's going to help us immediately in this next funding cycle. And so we certainly have to start planning for what all of that is going to mean for all of us.

So of course, what does it mean? It means a couple of things. Certainly, we've been busy behind the scenes talking about things. What we do know is that we are still going to anticipate a 45 to 50% cut in our current grant awards for VOCA. So when we go into this next bit of funding, we still anticipate that we're going to have to cut 45 to 50% of the funding that we have available. Staffs been meeting, our board met a number of times to talk about what that means. What the board decided to do is not have a competitive cycle for calendar year 25 and 26. So normally, in January, you would see an announcement that we're opening up that 25 and 26 funding cycle. Instead, all of you that are here as current grantees, regardless of funding source, whether it's VOCA, VAWA, SASP, generals or ARPA, will have one-year extensions on the current grants instead of a competitive funding cycle.

Our goal is really to make sure that we can try to figure out what is going to happen with funding rather than trying to guess what all of that may look like, because there's going to be, I think, different efforts that I'll talk about that may or may not produce some amount of money. What that translates into for

VOCA itself based on the cut that we just learned about from the feds is that we will only have \$24,475,000, approximately, to give out in that one funding year. So if you think about that, in our two-year funding cycle, we usually allocate \$50 or 60 million in VOCA and having additional funding from ARPA. We've been able to give out two-year awards around \$90 to \$95 million. So think about this, if you cut the \$90-95 million in half for one year, we would be announcing \$45 million, but we are now announcing probably the \$24,475,000. And it won't be an announcement. Instead, it will just be an allocation that we work on with all of you. And also those individuals who are currently an ARPA and or a general fund grant will be part of that fold as well.

For those grantees that are have a VAWA grant, or a SASP grant, we will also be working with you and we're trying to still figure out what your allocations will be for a one-year cycle. We don't have any of those figures yet for you. Today, we're focusing a little bit more on the VOCA piece. What we plan to do is continue to work on a number of things in gathering information to really figure out how do we award out that \$24,475,000 to all of you that fall into the category between VOCA, ARPA and general fund dollars. We are going to do a number of things that we'll talk about. But what we do know is that we hope to give you a figure in June of 2024. Approximately eight or nine months from now, we will be giving those figures out to all of you. And when we do that I want one piece to be really clear is that it's not operating off of the budget that you currently have. Because we certainly know that it's very, very significant to tell you: 1) that there's a 40 to 45% cut coming, and 2) then to tell you how to spend that. So our plan is to work very close with you as the GPMs and the GFM's to say, "Here's your allocation of the amount of money that we've figured out that you can have as an agency. How do you want to put that in the budget with eligible expenses?" We are not going to preemptively tell you, you have to do personnel or operating or whatever, you're going to work closely with your program manager to figure out what might be best for you for that one-year cycle.

There are a lot of things that we've been trying to do to minimize this impact. I know I've heard from people in the field, "You guys have talked about this every year, and then something comes in. And it's not as bad as it seems." And so I think it's really important for us to be honest about what we know is the state of the state right now, and then know that maybe there could be a solution, but there's no guarantee of a solution. So the best thing that we can all do is plan for what amounts and figures that we do know. I will say that we've been trying to do lots of things in coordination with partners and internally to try and mitigate some of this as it's going forward to even give you the amount of money that we do have available. The Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Violence Free Colorado and COVA, in partnership with our office have worked every year to go to the legislature for the past three years to say, "Hey, money's down, we need money" and that's the reason we've been able to not have the cuts prior. We did have legislation during the legislative session for 21 and 22, and 23. That got us money, including this last round. There was the \$32 million in ARPA that they were able to give us and the \$6 million in general funds. I will tell you, all of those efforts are continuing to be underway in preparation for the fiscal year 24 legislative session to say that we need general money support from Colorado in order to not have significant harm done to victim services in our state.

When we were talking with some agencies in the past, we did ask you to take unspent personnel costs and deobligate them, and put them back into basically the pot of money that we now have where we are getting that \$25 million. So our reasons for doing that were really those were vacancy savings

based on a number of reasons. Right? People maybe not having been able to hire or just delays in hiring. We know sometimes a grant starts and you can't hire right away. So in order to kind of make the cuts less significant, we asked individuals to deobligate that money. You've probably had some of those conversations where we've been less flexible about you keeping it and reallocating it somewhere else.

In the last legislative session, the Division of Criminal Justice in the long bill received some additional money, and part of that money was to go back into VOCA. We just granted and did grant amendments with 15 of our agencies that currently receive VOCA and asked them to take general fund money and spend that general fund money in lieu of VOCA. So again, it's these small little pieces that will allow us to keep trying to shore up the VOCA fund as much as possible. And for those of you who aren't those grantees, it doesn't change anything as far as the overall process. We just asked those 15 grantees and basically they'll get the general funds and have a pause on their VOCA. So they'll spend general fund money from like October to June and then they will go right back into VOCA after that. So they are being flexible and working with us. And what that does is save six, a little over \$6 million, again into that VOCA pot.

We just recently ran an additional VAWA opportunity and we still have some money that we need to spend in VAWA. Linsey as the acting VAWA administrator since Riley has stepped away from our office. Linsey is working with Ashley to look at some of those opportunities, and we may move some additional people over temporarily out of VOCA into VAWA to spend that \$700,000. Because the overall goal is we don't want to return any money from any of our pots while we're trying to shore up VOCA. So a couple people may be contacted and asked to switch to VAWA temporarily.

Then we've been talking with other states about their strategies. So we're not alone in kind of how this works. We are certainly different depending on if a state spends their award as they get it. But we have been in conversation with other states to try and see how they're making their cuts, what strategies that they're looking to do in order to figure out how to handle the cut across VOCA. Alyssa has been a big part of us wanting to have them join our team so that Alyssa can help us look at the best ways to sort of equitably do our grant administration based on statistics and what we know and where services are at and how we can potentially minimize impact. Alyssa presented a lot of information to our board on what we have seen as our trends and funding over the last couple years so that they could give some suggestions both to the board and then help and build on that, as we kind of go into these next phases. Everything I've talked about is just for fiscal year 25 and a continuation of the current funding cycle, it doesn't mean that we are necessarily going to know and have more money when we go into fiscal year 26. And we don't know then at that time, if we'll decide to do a one-year, fiscal year 26 competitive, or if we'll go back to a two-year cycle. We really want to take this time to see if the legislature is able to find some money, and VOCA is able to find some federal solutions, etc. But we're taking all of that into account, and also using Alyssa's skills and knowledge and trying to figure out how to best implement all of that with all of you. So there's a couple of things that we will be doing. And I'm going to turn it over to Alyssa to talk a little bit about this first bullet point, which is the survey.

Yeah, thanks, Kelly. And so everyone, I think what Kelly mentioned on the previous slide about, you know, speaking to other states and learning from strategies that others have used to go through similar

processes and navigate similar budget cuts and funding reductions, we also feel it's very important to hear from you all, and to incorporate your voice and your perspectives into our funding decisions as we go forward. And so we really, we have a few different plans on how we are hoping to incorporate your voice and perspectives. And the first one that you'll note is a survey that will be sent out via the CVS grants email. So you can expect to see this survey information about this survey come out in the next few days. This is a survey that's designed to be taken once per CVS funded grant program. So if you're an individual that has hands in on multiple different programs, or awards, then you'll take this survey for each of those programs. But otherwise, the survey is designed to be completed just once per program. And we're going to send out some more information about the specific questions on the survey. But the overall purpose of this survey is to help us understand how the budget cuts may impact the work that you're doing. So that we can inform our decision-making process as we have these limited funds and figure out how to allocate those funds. Keeping in mind victim services throughout the state, as well as equitable of a process as we can try to make this. And then you'll also see some future plans for some focus groups and things like that. Those will be coming down the line. So you can expect to hear some more information about those. We're hoping to utilize more of this focus group methodology for thinking about decision making for the future grant cycles. So we don't have as much time coming into some of the decisions for this third-year extension, which is why we've opted for a survey. But going forward, you'll hear some more about focus groups. So that's all I have to say, Oh, the only other thing to add about the survey is that the more details and the more thought that you can put into the responses in this survey, the better we as the OVP team will be able to utilize that information to help guide our decision making. So I just want to encourage you to take some time on this survey. It's not something that you can blast through in 10 minutes. We wanted to provide opportunities for you to really express your thoughts and your perspectives. So just plan to maybe take some time to do that if you're able to.

Great, thanks you Alyssa.

And I know Alyssa is working on a way so that you'll see the questions and some information about it. We're also going to try and make sure that you can start it and stop it and return to it if you have to give some thought to some things. But I do think that as much detail and time that you can give us that will be greatly appreciated.

I do want to say that we're not necessarily saying that we're just going to take everybody's grant and do a 41% cut across everybody's grant. That may not be how we do that. And we're going to be looking at impacted service delivery area, what's there, all of those sorts of factors. Also, based on what individuals tell us within the survey before we make a decision about what is the best way to make that reduction. But it may not necessarily be a 41% across the board, it may have varying degrees and that's part of what we still need to work on and also why your input is so valuable to us.

The other thing I would suggest, obviously you can't do this with your grant funds, is lobbying. But I do think it's important for you to be paying attention to legislative efforts this year if in fact, there are bills that go forward or ways in which you want to choose to engage in voice around victim service funding,

if you see initiatives, I would certainly encourage you to do that. To make sure that legislators understand the impact it could have to you or to your community or to victims in your community.

I would really, re-emphasize that once we do know how much your 25 award is going to be, that the coordination with your GPM is going to be really, really key to make sure that you can talk through what makes sense for you as an agency and what that grant should look like. And they will be available to you and ready to have those conversations and kind of work through what will fit best for the 25 funding cycle.

I think the other thing that you guys are probably already thinking about as well, but it's important is when things like this happen, is it is really important to decide and talk with your community partners. I know some partners did this, when VALE was getting a little bit low is think who can you partner with in your own community that may be doing a similar service or a service that you're both doing. Are there places you can share space, or anything that you can do to sort of cut down costs and programming so that you can save your resources while we kind of work through whatever this may mean during the calendar year 25. Depending on how you're funded, also talking with your city council or your county commissioners. Again, this is partly why although we don't have all of the answers and information today, we thought it was really important to at least get information out to you today so you can start having those conversations in planning the best that you can.

For all of this, I will say too, obviously if something comes through in a legislative session, the best thing that we can do is then try to pivot and see what the impact will mean. So it may mean that we're able to do more in the 25 cycle than we anticipated, but we're also going to be looking at those out years. So if there's an allocation of money by chance from the legislature, it'll depend on how those things work. So sometimes they do a one-time allocation, like they have done in these past bills that just passed. Sometimes they can do a continuing appropriation, and any of those things will then change how in fact, we move through our funding strategy. So it could be that we'll be circling back with all of you and saying, "You know, we got some money. That's great news. We are going to decrease some of those cuts, and work on figures." But the reason we're not trying to give anybody figures until June is that that whole legislative process, although the session starts in January, we may in fact, not know if there's allocations that are coming forth until May. And so we'll have to definitely look and pivot in May, based on what we know, and gives you information then in June.

That is all of the actual slides on information. I think there are a couple things. We will create the FAQ. I apologize regarding the interpreters. I don't think we had seen that request. So my apologies for not having the ASL available but I know Linsey had put in some help in the chat for ASL and Spanish that we will have a transcript of the session. We are going to also start a question part right now. We'll record all those questions, and we will post both the webinar up to the point where the question section starts and then we will do an FAQ with everybody's questions to capture what the questions were from everybody that's on here. Moving forward, if you just happen to have questions about the legislative session, those are probably best sent to me. And so my email is up there for that. If you just have questions about next steps and how things are going or anything that you had as a follow up to the funding, you can send that to the CVS grants email. Ashley monitors that email and will either respond

herself or we will staff it as a team and get responses back out and if relevant, put it back up on the FAQ which will be on our website.

So based on that, I'm going to stop recording.