

**ARK-TEX COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (ATCOG)  
REGIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RCJAC)  
POLICY GUIDELINES**

***APPLICATION PROCEDURES***

**Community Plans**

1. Each proposal must provide services, which have been identified as a need in the Community Plan covering the service delivery area. Each applicant should contact ATCOG Criminal Justice staff to determine if the proposed project is listed as a need in the Community Plan. ATCOG Criminal Justice staff can provide contact information for the Community Plans to applicants. The Community Plan is available to view on the ATCOG website, [www.atcog.org](http://www.atcog.org).
2. The Community Plan for the region shall be reviewed each year, and revised if necessary, with an effort to follow the format recommended by the Criminal Justice Division of the Governor's Office (CJD). Based on the current requirements by CJD, the top five priorities within each category of the Community Plan (Victim Services, Juvenile Services, Law Enforcement) will be used in the grant application scoring process and also submitted to CJD. Focus groups of the previously mentioned categories will be formed at the Regional Community Planning Meeting, and these individual groups will develop a list of recommendations for the top five (can be less than five if necessary) priorities of each category. These recommendations will be reviewed by the RCJAC for their approval prior to the scoring process. A list of participating representatives present at the Community Planning meeting, and their affiliation, should be attached to the Community Plan, with the date of review and revision.

**Grant Application Workshop**

3. Each applicant must attend a Grant Application Workshop presented by ATCOG Criminal Justice staff prior to beginning the application process each year until further notice. All local officials and anyone who has expressed an interest in applying for a grant will be notified of the date, time and location of the workshop. Mandatory workshop attendance may or may not be required in the future. This information will be announced with notification of availability of application packets. A one-on-one conference can substitute for workshop attendance if someone is unable to attend.

**Notification of Application Deadlines**

4. All local officials, current and potential grantees, will be notified of grant application deadlines as soon as they are established.
5. Under no circumstances will grant applications be accepted after the deadline.

## **Decreasing Ratio Funding/Maximum Funding Years**

6. Decreasing ratio and five year maximum projects shall establish their CJD request each year by following the percentages listed below (Benchmark is based on the amount awarded by CJD in the first year of funding). This requirement is in effect for the following funding categories: Criminal Justice Programs, and General Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

1<sup>st</sup> year – 100% CJD funding (Benchmark amount established)  
2<sup>nd</sup> year - 80% CJD funding  
3<sup>rd</sup> year - 60% CJD funding  
4<sup>th</sup> year - 40% CJD funding  
5<sup>th</sup> year - 40% CJD funding

If a grant applicant is not funded during any year of the cycle, they will be allowed to apply at the same percentage/amount for the following year. (Ex. In 2008 an agency is currently at 80% (yr. 2) applying for \$50,000, but they are not awarded the grant. In 2009, they will be allowed to apply at 80% (yr. 2) for \$50,000. If awarded in 2009, they will then be allowed to apply at 60% (yr. 3) in 2010.)

Exceptions to this policy include the Purchase of Juvenile Services Project (GJJDP) and the Regional Law Enforcement Training Project (Criminal Justice Programs). These two projects are exempt from the decreasing funding ratio and maximum years policy.

## **Requests for Additional Information**

7. ATCOG staff may request additional information from an applicant other than what is included in the CJD application, forms, or attachments. Failure to provide the requested information in a timely manner may result in delay in processing the application. Failure to provide the information at all may result in the RCJAC declining to review the application.

## **Prioritization Meeting**

8. Mandatory Attendance of Prioritization/Scoring Meeting: All Prioritization meetings will be conducted at a physical location. Grant applicants are required to have a representative attend the RCJAC Prioritization Meeting, to provide a brief presentation regarding their project to the Committee. If no representative is present for an applicant, the Committee has the option to not consider the project for funding. Upon receipt of copies of the grant applications and review instruments, the committee members may complete the scoring sheets at their convenience and bring them to the Prioritization Meeting. Committee members must attend the meeting or their scores will not be considered. In an emergency situation, the Committee may consider allowing the submission of scores on an individual basis. If scores are accepted from a member based on an emergency, the member should then send a notarized letter to ATCOG relating the circumstances.

If Committee members wish to revise their scores after hearing the applicant presentations, they may do so before submitting them to ATCOG staff for tabulation.

CJD does not require that the Committee meet in order to score applications. Scoring may be completed by mail, with a follow-up meeting to approve the results of the scoring tabulation. At such time as the Committee should decide to follow that process, attendance by applicant representatives would no longer be mandatory.

### **Prioritization Meeting Outcomes**

9. The results of the prioritization meeting will be compiled and mailed to the committee members and the grant applicants the following day, if possible. If an applicant wishes to inquire about the scoring results sooner, they may contact ATCOG staff.
10. The RCJAC has the option not to recommend for funding, an application or line item(s) identified as ineligible, or for funding sources other than the following:
  - General Victim Assistance – Direct Services Program
    - (Victims of Crime Act – VOCA)
    - (Violence Against Women Act – VAWA)
  - Violent Crimes Against Women Justice and Training Program –  
Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Dating Violence, and Stalking
  - Juvenile Justice Program
    - (Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act – JJDP)
    - (State Criminal Justice Planning Fund - 421)
  - Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program
    - (Byrne Justice Assistance Grant)
    - (State Criminal Justice Planning Fund – 421)
11. The decision not to recommend funding these applications must be accurately reported to CJD.
12. The decision to recommend a different funding amount (different from the original amount requested by the grant applicant) must be reached by a consensus vote of the RCJAC present at the scoring meeting.

### **SCORING GUIDELINES**

1. New projects and continuation projects shall be reviewed, scored, and prioritized for funding each year, as applicable, utilizing a standard review instrument.
2. All projects considered for CJD funding must meet the guidelines and requirements established by CJD annually.

3. A grant applicant, or individual(s) acting on behalf of the applicant, shall not contact any RCJAC member prior to any scoring/prioritization meeting to persuade a score. If an applicant, or individual(s) acting on behalf of the applicant, contacts a scoring member to persuade a score, their application may be disqualified at the discretion of the RCJAC.

If a RCJAC member receives a contact of this nature from an applicant, or individual(s) acting on behalf of the applicant, the scoring member should contact the RCJAC Chairman and/or ATCOG Criminal Justice staff.

4. All applications in each funding category must be prioritized and ranked for funding consideration by the RCJAC. These recommendations shall be forwarded to the Ark-Tex Council of Governments Board of Directors/Executive Committee for their approval. ATCOG will submit prioritization results to CJD.
5. Each application shall be scored by each RCJAC member unless the member has a conflict of interest, and an average score shall be assigned to each proposal. Applications in each category shall be prioritized according to the average score assigned to the proposals. Proxy votes shall not be allowed at scoring meetings.
6. **Conflict of Interest:** The COG governing body, RCJAC members and COG staff must abstain from scoring and voting on any application, other than a grant application submitted by the 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 governing 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, or a substantial amount of tangible goods or routine services, from the applicant agency as a result of the grant, if awarded.

If a CJAC member must abstain from scoring a project, that member must recuse themselves from scoring the project as well as remove themselves from the room while other CJAC members are scoring that specific project. Once the members have moved on to another project the CJAC member may return.

7. The high and low score of each grant application will be dropped if the number of eligible RCJAC scoring members (to submit their scores) for the particular funding source is ten or greater.
8. In the event of a tie, the following procedure will be utilized: 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 remaining score until the tie is broken. The scores resulting from the tie breaking process will only be used for the purpose of breaking the tie. These scores will not be used to change any other rankings in the prioritization process. The CJAC shall be notified of the tie and the revised results.
9. All meetings of the RCJAC shall be open to the public. The meetings are not subject to the Texas Government Code, Chapter 551 (Texas Open Meetings Act). The RCJAC Chairman or presiding Chairman has the option of closing the meetings when deemed necessary for confidentiality purposes. Minutes of the RCJAC meetings, documents distributed and other records are the property of ATCOG. These materials are available for public view, at the ATCOG offices, upon receipt of a written request by the interested party. Except where these bylaws require otherwise, Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the conduct of RCJAC meetings. All meetings of the ATCOG governing body, including those meetings which may address criminal justice related issues such as CJD grant prioritization, shall be held in compliance with the requirements described in Texas Government Code, Chapter 551 (Texas Open Meetings Act).
10. RCJAC Representation: The RCJAC is required to have a multi-disciplinary representation of members from the region. For the purpose of reviewing CJD grants, at a minimum, the RCJAC must include representation from the following: law enforcement, juvenile justice, drug abuse prevention, non-profit organizations, victim services, mental health, prosecution/courts, education, and concerned citizens or parents, with no more than one-third (1/3) of the total membership being representatives of one group.
11. Review Instrument: The review instrument used by the RCJAC to score the grant applications is developed by ATCOG staff to accommodate the recommendations/approvals by the RCJAC, based on CJD requirements and the local priorities in the Regional Criminal Justice Strategic Plan. This review instrument is subject to change each year, as the CJD requirements and the local priorities are also subject to change.
12. Appeal Procedure: Each applicant will be allowed to appeal actions of the Regional Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (RCJAC). Appeals must be based on a verifiable error made during the prioritization or review process and the applicant must be able to show that the error actually caused the application or portion of the application to not be funded. Factors that allow discretion by RCJAC members will not be considered for an appeal. The applicant must submit written documentation in support of the appeal. Letters

and phone calls of support will not be considered as part of the official appeal process.

All appeals must be handled as follows:

- a) An applicant must notify the ATCOG Executive Director in writing of the alleged violation of the RCJAC scoring guidelines and/or the error(s) made in the scoring/prioritization process within ten (10) days following the scoring meeting.
- b) The ATCOG Board of Directors shall consider all appeals in an open meeting. Documentation submitted by the applicant that meets the criteria as stated above will be considered by the ATCOG Board of Directors. Subsequent notification by ATCOG of a decision concerning funding serves as final notice of approval or denial.

Revised as approved by the RCJAC 01-14-16.

Approved by the ATCOG Board of Directors 01-28-16.