



2024 – 2025 Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Competitive Grant Process

October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025

Wisconsin Department of Justice - Office of Crime Victim Services Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Assistance 2024 – 2025 Competitive Grant Process

Summary

Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of Crime Victim Services (OCVS) houses resources and programs for victims and survivors of crime, their family and friends, as well as professionals in the victim services field. OCVS serves and supports crime victims and victim service providers in Wisconsin because justice is not fully served unless we serve crime victims.

One of the ways OCVS fulfills this mission is by managing and administering federal grant programs and state funding for victims of crime and victim service providers. The largest of those funding sources is the federal VOCA Assistance Formula Grant. VOCA supports direct victim services, such as safety planning, counseling, crisis intervention, shelter, and legal advocacy, to survivors of all crime types.

OCVS released the 2024 – 2025 VOCA Competitive grant funding announcement on March 19, 2024, for a total award amount of \$13,000,000 with individual awards capped at \$250,000. The funding announcement was open for 10.5 weeks and required submission via Egrants. While a few applicants applied for funding that exceeded the cap, OCVS considered their request as limited to the capped amount of \$250,000. In total, OCVS received 133 applications requesting funding of \$26,933,327 – more than twice the amount of funding available. The need for funding to service victims of crime in Wisconsin far exceeds the resources available through VOCA.

OCVS created this document to provide context and explain the methodology utilized in the competitive process.



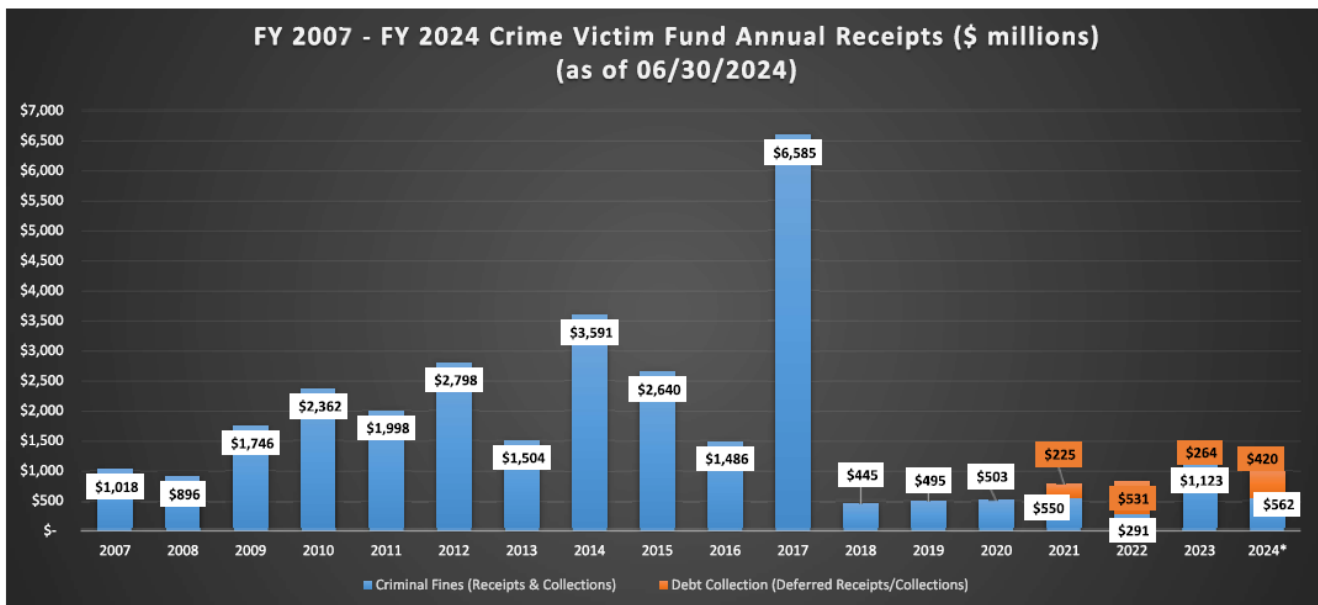
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History and Current Status of the Crime Victims Fund (CVF)

The federal Crime Victims Fund (CVF) finances VOCA Assistance Formula Grant awards to U.S. states and territories. The CVF is a fund within the U.S. Treasury consisting of non-tax revenue (mostly fines, penalties, and bond forfeitures from convicted federal criminals) administered by the U.S. Department of Justice (US DOJ) Office for Victims of Crime (OVC).

State of the Crime Victims Fund (Receipts)



Source: Jeffrey Nelson, “History of OVC and VOCA” (presentation, 2024 VOCA National Joint Training Conference, New Orleans, LA, August 5, 2024)

Since 2017, the balance of the Crime Victims Fund has declined due to many factors, including a large increase in the obligations cap set by Congress, \$1.5 billion removed from the CVF in November 2015, funds transferred to the Office for Violence Against Women (OVW), an overall reduction in the number of fines ordered for both individual and organizational defendants in federal cases, and an increase in annual statutory set-aside allocations to various entities and funds. A continued challenge is the collection of criminal fines and fees, which has seen a notable decrease since 2017.

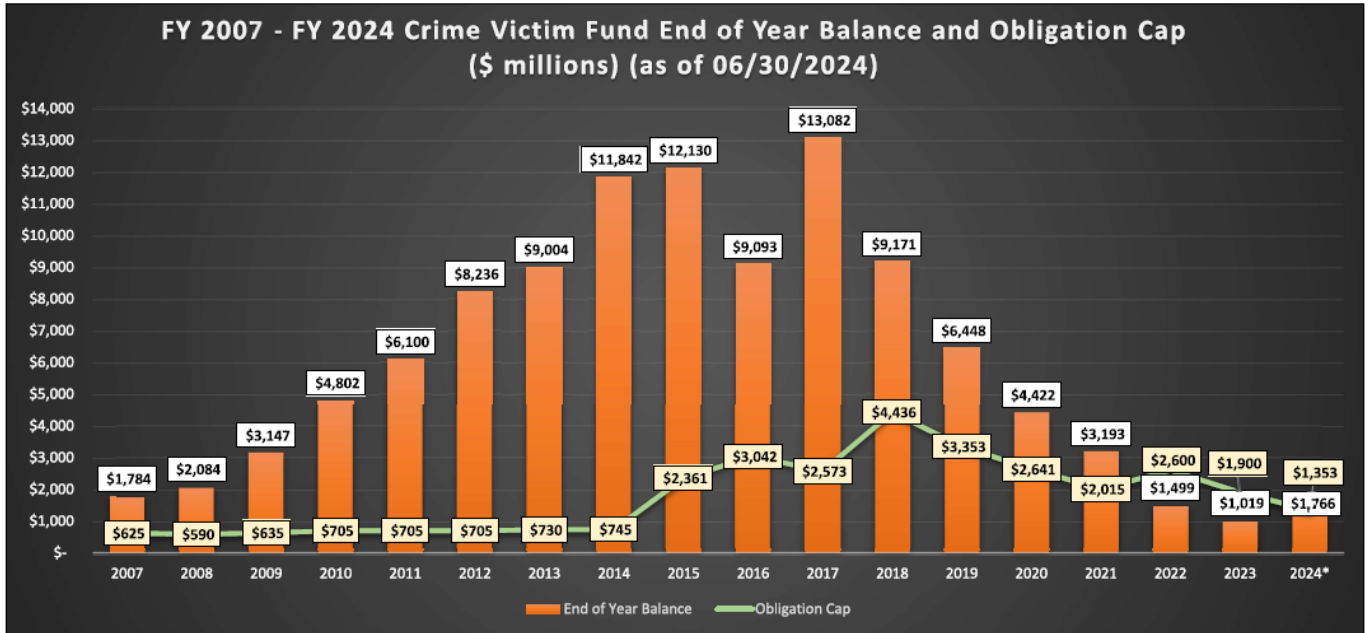
In July 2021, the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act was signed into law in an attempt to stabilize the CVF. Provisions include the requirement that monetary penalties from federal deferred prosecution and non-prosecution agreements go into the CVF. It remains to be seen how soon this law will stabilize the fund and it is likely that further measures will be necessary to replenish the fund for future years.



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State of the Crime Victims Fund (Balance)



Source: Jeffrey Nelson, “History of OVC and VOCA” (presentation, 2024 VOCA National Joint Training Conference, New Orleans, LA, August 5, 2024)

Federal Allocation Process

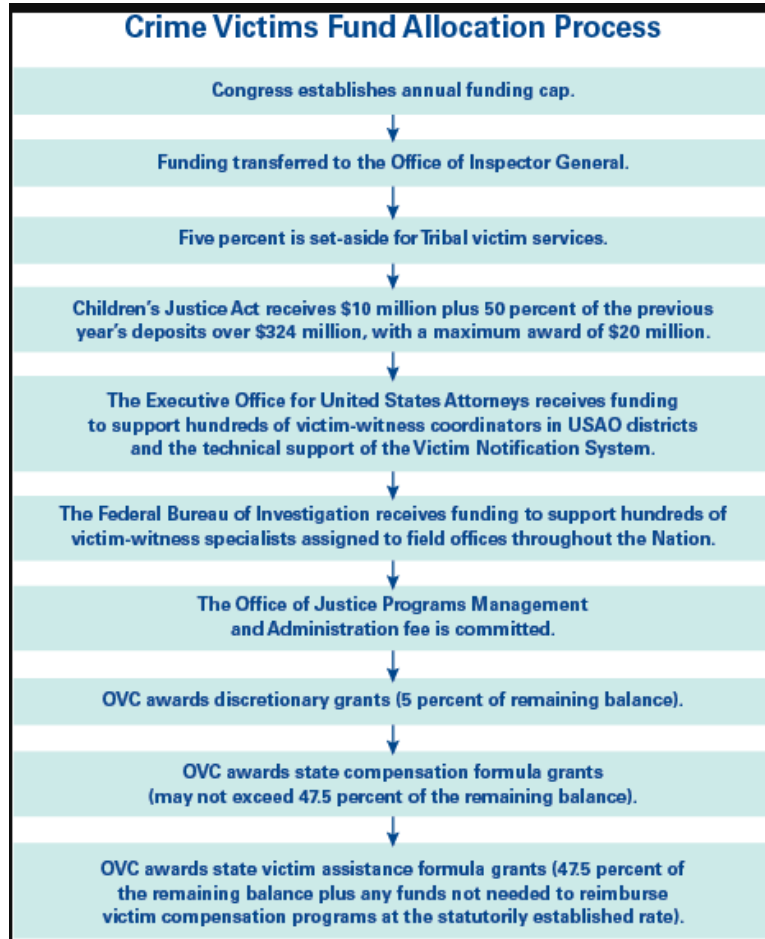
Federal, state, and tribal victim service providers (VSPs) receive formula grants disbursed through State Administering Agencies (SAA), discretionary grants, and set asides according to an established annual allocation process.

VOCA state victim assistance funding decreased over a seven-year period, from \$3.328 billion in FY 2018 to \$779 million in FY 2024. Through these state grants, OVC supports 57 percent of all VSPs in the country, according to the National Census of Victim Service Providers count (FY 2022).



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Source: “Crime Victim Fund Allocation Process”, Office for Victims of Crime Website, <https://ovc.ojp.gov/about/crime-victims-fund/allocation-process>

Wisconsin’s Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2024 Award

Wisconsin DOJ’s OCVS, the SAA for VOCA, receives a formula-based award each federal fiscal year and administers those funds to VSPs throughout Wisconsin. Since 2019, Wisconsin DOJ subawarded \$44.5 million per year to VSP agencies through VOCA. OCVS was able to sustain funding at \$44.5 million annually for all five years of the competitive cycle despite decreasing annual state awards by utilizing American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The funding filled the gap between available VOCA funding and award amounts for the last two years of the 5-year competitive grant cycle. Without this temporary access to federal funding, VSPs would have had their awards reduced starting in FFY 2023.

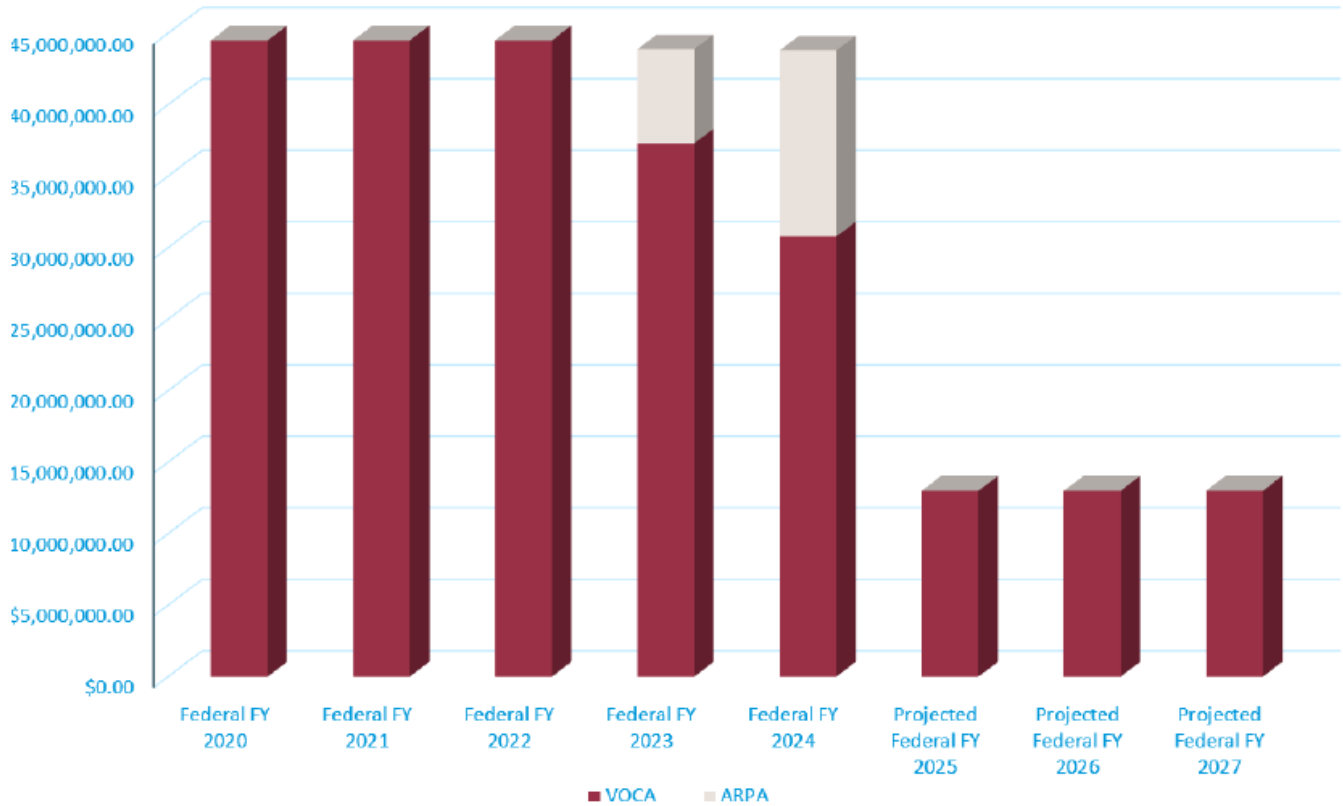
Beginning in 2024, continued decreases in the CVF put Wisconsin’s VOCA subawards for VSPs at \$13 million per year through 2027— **an annual reduction of approximately \$31.5 million, or 70 percent.**



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VOCA Subawards in Wisconsin



Source: Wisconsin Department of Justice, Office of Crime Victim Services

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OCVS recognizes this funding reduction will have a significant impact on how VSPs operate and ultimately how victims of crime will be able to access services. OCVS's approach to funding is meant to ensure this limited funding has the greatest impact in serving the needs of victims.

3-Year Funding Cycle

OCVS reduced the competitive award cycle from five years to three years to help account for fluctuations of VOCA funding coming into the state and to provide the greatest amount of funding stability to subgrant award recipients. OCVS conducts a competitive process once every three to five years to evaluate the equitable distribution of funds across the state. Providing funding on a multi-year cycle helps to minimize volatility in award amounts, which helps recipients plan the utilization of their funding over time.



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\$250,000 Award Cap

OCVS created an annual award cap of \$250,000 to make subgrant awards as equitable as possible. \$13 million is not sufficient to award all current subrecipients using a percentage reduction approach instead of a cap.

In 2023, agencies **funded** above the \$250,000 threshold made up 51.2 percent of current subgrant applicants. OCVS **assessed** the impact of VOCA reductions on each program, evaluating each agency's total VOCA award and how much that VOCA award contributes to the overall agency budget. A percentage reduction would only fund those with the largest VOCA awards and exclude smaller agencies because they would be receiving such a reduced award that the amount would not be impactful.

Factors evaluated in determining cap amount included: current award levels and gaps in service areas, how to fund as many agencies as possible, potential impact on those agencies OCVS currently funds, and ensuring equity for new applicants in the application process.

Priority Funding Areas

The following funding priorities were identified, explained to potential applicants, and utilized in evaluating applications:

- By-and-for organizations that provide victim services to communities impacted by inequity.
- Demonstrated, improved, and intentional collaboration around sexual assault victim services amongst system partners and other service providers.
- Demonstrated, improved, and intentional collaboration in rural areas amongst system partners and other service providers.
- Maximized use of resources in each community to serve all victims or crime.

Methodology

OCVS deployed a standard methodology to assist in making funding recommendations. Rare exceptions to this approach were documented and only made with sufficient justification.

The following assumptions provided the backdrop for the evaluation process:

- 1) Applicant agencies asked for what they needed (capped at a maximum of \$250,000 per agency).
- 2) Applicant agencies know their budgets better than OCVS.

All applications were reviewed both internally at OCVS and by external reviewers. Applications were scored based on the quality of response, level of detail provided, and ability to effectively provide the services outlined in the application. External reviewers consisted of a panel of experts representing a multi-system background in victim services.



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Average application scores from reviewers at OCVS and external reviewers were used to determine whether an application would receive funding, and the funding level if eligible. Each application received three scores: an average external reviewer score, an internal reviewer score, and a final average application score. The average application score was used in the standard methodology. Average external reviewer scores were calculated by collecting a total score from each external reviewer for a given application then averaging those scores. Internal reviewer scores were calculated by collecting a total score from the internal reviewer. Final average application scores were then determined by calculating the average of the application's average external reviewer score and internal reviewer score.

Using the average application score for all applicants, an upper and lower threshold was set for funding decisions. The upper threshold was set at 105 points, to highlight applications that successfully addressed each section along with at least one additional priority area. Each applicant above this threshold received their full application amount, up to the \$250,000 cap. The lower threshold was set at 75 points, due to the competitive nature of this funding and limited funding availability. Applicants below this threshold did not receive funding.

As explained below, to address the remaining applications that scored between 75 and 105 – the “middle” applicants – OCVS used a formula to reduce award amounts (due to limited available funding) based on two factors: (1) the application's average score; and (2) a prorated reduction so that the total overall award amount equaled the available funding of \$13,000,000.

First, each application was given a percent grade. The grades were calculated by dividing the application's average score by 115 (the maximum number of points possible). For example, an application scoring 115 points would receive a grade of 100 percent while an application scoring 88 points would receive a grade of 76.5 percent. The percent grade was then multiplied by the amount requested in the application, resulting in a reduction of the award amount based on the scoring of the application. Unfortunately, even after adjusting award amounts based on score the overall requests were still around \$20,000,000 – or \$7,000,000 above available funding.

Second, OCVS reduced each application on a prorated basis to account for this overage. To do so, OCVS divided the application amount after the reduction based on scoring by the total amount of all applications in the “middle” group after scoring reductions. This percentage was then used to determine the application's prorated “share” of the overage, which OCVS used as the second reduction.

Overall, this approach reduced each “middle” grant by an equitable amount based on the application score and the degree to which that applicant's request accounted for the overage.

As a final review, OCVS checked several scenarios to understand the impact of this methodology. OCVS confirmed that applications with a higher average application score received a larger portion of their requested amount. For example, application “A” scored 91.00 points and received 42 percent of their requested amount, while application “B” scored 75.80 and received 35 percent of their requested amount. OCVS also confirmed that using this methodology, applications that requested larger amounts but scored significantly lower would not receive more funds solely due to their larger request. For example, application “A” requested \$198,095 and scored 95.15 points. Application “B”



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requested \$223,163 and scored 73.90 points. Using the method described above, application “A” would receive \$87,987, while application “B” would receive \$76,184.

For further information, please contact:

Alexandra Stanley
VOCA Administrator
StanleyAP@doj.state.wi.us

Teresa Nienow
Director of Grant Programs and Training
NienowTA@doj.state.wi.us