State Justice Institute Grant Program

FY2026 Grant Application Guide

Pursuant to the State Justice Institute Act of 1984 (42 U.S.C. 10701, et seq.), the State Justice Institute (SJI) is authorized to award grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts to state and local courts, nonprofit organizations, and others for the purpose of improving the quality of justice in the state courts of the United States.

ELIGIBILITY

SJI is authorized by Congress to award grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts to the following entities and types of organizations:

- State and local courts and their agencies (42 U.S.C. 10705(b)(1)(A)).
- National nonprofit organizations controlled by, operating in conjunction with, and serving the judicial branches of state governments (42 U.S.C. 10705(b)(1)(B)).
- National nonprofit organizations for the education and training of judges and support personnel of the judicial branch of state governments (42 U.S.C. 10705(b)(1)(C)). An applicant is considered a national education and training applicant under section 10705(b)(1)(C) if:
    1. The principal purpose or activity of the applicant is to provide education and training to state and local judges and court personnel; and
    2. The applicant demonstrates a record of substantial experience in the field of judicial education and training.
- Other eligible grant recipients (42 U.S.C. 10705 (b)(2)(A)–(D)).
    a. Provided that the objectives of the project can be served better, the Institute is also authorized to make awards to:
        a. Nonprofit organizations with expertise in judicial administration
        b. Institutions of higher education
        c. Individuals, partnerships, firms, corporations (for-profit organizations must waive their fees)
        d. Private agencies with expertise in judicial administration
    b. SJI may also make awards to state or local agencies and institutions other than courts for services that cannot be adequately provided through nongovernmental arrangements (42 U.S.C. 10705(b)(3)).

SJI is prohibited from awarding grants to federal, tribal, and international courts.

GRANT APPLICATION DEADLINES

The SJI Board makes awards on a federal fiscal year quarterly basis. Applications may be submitted at any time but will only be considered for award based on the timetable below:

Federal Fiscal Year Quarter	Application Due Date
1	1-Nov
2	1-Feb
3	1-May
4	1-Aug

To be considered timely, an application must be submitted by the application deadline noted above. Applicants must use the SJI Grants Management System (GMS) to submit all applications and post-award documents. The SJI GMS is accessible at https://gms.sji.gov. SJI urges applicants to submit applications at least 72 hours prior to the application due date, in order to allow time for the applicant to receive an application acceptance message and to correct in a timely fashion any problems that may arise, such as missing or incomplete forms.

Questions related to the SJI Grant Program or the SJI GMS must be directed to contact@sji.gov.

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

SJI was established by the State Justice Institute Authorization Act of 1984 (42 U.S.C. 10701 et seq.) to improve the administration of justice in the state courts of the United States. Incorporated in the State of Virginia as a private, nonprofit corporation, SJI is charged, by statute, with the responsibility to:

- Direct a national program of financial assistance designed to assure that each citizen of the United States is provided ready access to a fair and effective system of justice
- Foster coordination and cooperation with the federal judiciary
- Promote recognition of the importance of the separation of powers doctrine to an independent judiciary
- Encourage education for judges and support personnel of state court systems through national and state organizations

To accomplish these broad objectives, SJI is authorized to provide funding to state courts, national organizations which support and are supported by state courts, national judicial education organizations, and other organizations that can assist in improving the quality of justice in the state courts.

Through the award of grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements, SJI is authorized to perform the following activities:

- Support technical assistance, demonstrations, special projects, research and training to improve the administration of justice in the state courts
- Provide for the preparation, publication, and dissemination of information regarding state judicial systems
- Participate in joint projects with federal agencies and other private grantors
- Evaluate or provide for the evaluation of programs and projects to determine their impact upon the quality of criminal, civil, and juvenile justice and the extent to which they have contributed to improving the quality of justice in the state courts
- Encourage and assist in furthering judicial education
- Encourage, assist, and serve in a consulting capacity to state and local courts in the development, maintenance, and coordination of criminal, civil, and juvenile justice programs and services

SJI is supervised by a Board of Directors appointed by the U.S. President, with the advice and consent of the U.S. Senate. The Board is statutorily composed of six judges; a state court administrator; and four members of the public, no more than two of the same political party. Additional information about SJI, including a list of members of the Board of Directors, is available at https://www.sji.gov/.

Priority Investment Areas

The SJI Board of Directors has established Priority Investment Areas for grant funding. SJI will allocate significant financial resources through grant-making for these Priority Investment Areas. The Priority Investment Areas are applicable to all grant types. SJI strongly encourages potential

grant applicants to consider projects addressing one or more of these Priority Investment Areas and to integrate the following factors into each proposed project:

- Evidence based, data-driven decision making
- Cross sector collaboration
- Systemic approaches (as opposed to standalone programs)
- Institutionalization of new court processes and procedures
- Ease of replication
- Sustainability

For FY 2026, the Priority Investment Areas are listed below in no specific order.

Opioids and Other Dangerous Drugs, and Behavioral Health Responses

- Opioids and Behavioral Health Court Responses – Research indicates that justice involved persons have significantly greater proportions of mental, substance use, and co-occurring disorders than are found in the public. SJI supports cross-sector collaboration and information sharing that emphasizes policies and practices designed to improve court responses to justice-involved persons with behavioral health and other co-occurring needs.

- Trauma-Informed Approaches – Judges, court staff, system stakeholders and court-involved persons (defendants, respondents, and victims) alike may be impacted by prior trauma. This is particularly, but not exclusively, true for those with mental illness and/or substance use disorders. SJI supports trauma-informed training, policies and practices in all aspects of the judicial process.

- Note: Due to limited grant resources, SJI will not support grants that propose to maintain, enhance, or expand the operations of problem-solving courts. SJI will continue to prioritize innovative projects that can be replicated across the U.S. regardless of court type. SJI encourages potential applicants to consider federal grant funding for these activities. Information regarding other funding opportunities can be accessed on SJI's Funding Toolkit, the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs Funding Opportunities page, as well as US Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration funding opportunities page.

Promoting Access to Justice and Procedural Fairness

- Procedural Fairness – A fundamental role of courts is to ensure fair processes and just outcomes for litigants. SJI promotes the integration of research-based procedural fairness principles, policies, and practices into state court operations to increase public trust and confidence in the court system, reduce recidivism, and increase compliance with court orders.

- Self-Represented Litigation - SJI promotes court-based solutions to address increases in self-represented litigants; specifically making courts more user-friendly by simplifying

court forms, providing one-on-one assistance, developing guides, handbooks, and instructions on how to proceed, developing court-based self-help centers, and using Internet technologies to increase access. These projects are improving outcomes for litigants and saving valuable court resources.

Protecting Victims, Underserved, and Vulnerable Populations

- Human Trafficking - SJI addresses the impact of federal and state human trafficking laws on the state courts, and the challenges faced by state courts in dealing with cases involving trafficking victims and their families, including victims who are U.S. citizens. These efforts are intended to empower state courts to identify victims, link them with vital services, and hold traffickers accountable.

- Rural Justice – Rural areas and their justice systems routinely have fewer resources and more barriers than their urban counterparts, such as availability of services, lack of transportation, and smaller workforces. Programs and practices that are effective in urban areas are often inappropriate and or lack supported research for implementation in rural areas. SJI supports rural courts by identifying promising and best practices, and promoting resources, education, and training opportunities uniquely designed for rural courts and court users.

- Guardianship, Conservatorship, and Elder Issues - SJI assists courts in improving court oversight of guardians and conservators for the elderly and incapacitated adults through visitor programs, electronic reporting, and training.

Advancing Justice Reform

- Criminal Justice Reform - SJI assists state courts in taking a leadership role in promoting offender accountability and oversight; transparency, governance, and structural reforms that promote access to justice; and implementing innovative diversion and re-entry programs that serve to improve outcomes for justice-involved persons and reduce the impact of the costs of the justice system.

- Juvenile Justice Reform - SJI supports innovative projects that advance best practices in handling dependency and delinquency cases; promote effective court oversight of juveniles in the justice system; address the impact of trauma on juvenile behavior; assist the courts in identification of appropriate provision of services for juveniles; and address juvenile re-entry.

- Family and Civil Justice Reform - SJI promotes court-based solutions for the myriad of civil case types, such as domestic relations, housing, employment, debt collection, which are overwhelming court dockets.

Transforming Courts

- Courthouse and Public Safety – In the current climate of increasing threats and acts of courthouse violence being committed across the nation, state and local courts are seeking new and innovative ways to enhance the safety of courthouses. SJI has long recognized

the need to assist state and local courts in improving the safety of the public, court staff, and judges in court facilities.

- Technology – Courts must integrate technological advances[1] into daily judicial processes and proceedings. SJI supports projects that institutionalize the innovative technology that has successfully advanced the use of electronic filing and payment systems, online dispute resolution, remote work, and virtual court proceedings. SJI promotes projects that streamline case filing and management processes, thereby reducing time and costs to litigants and the courts; provide online access to courts to litigants so that disputes can be resolved more efficiently; and make structural changes to court services that enable them to evolve into an online environment. Additionally, SJI supports the examination of potential integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into court processes, including identification of positive outcomes and potential limitations of AI.

- Cybersecurity – Courts must also be prepared for cyberattacks on court systems, such as denial of service and ransomware attacks on court case management systems, websites, and other critical information technology infrastructure. SJI supports projects that assist courts in preparing for, and responding to, these attacks, and share lessons-learned to courts across the United States.

- Emergency Response and Recovery - Courts must be prepared for natural disasters and public health emergencies and institutionalize the most effective and efficient practices and processes that evolve during response and recovery. SJI supports projects that look to the future of judicial service delivery by identifying and replicating innovations and alternate means of conducting court business due to public health emergencies such as pandemics, and natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and wildfires.

- Strategic Planning – Courts must rely on a deliberate process to determine organizational values, mission, vision, goals, and objectives. SJI promotes structured planning processes and organizational assessments to assist courts in setting priorities, allocating resources, and identifying areas for on-going improvements in efficiency and effectiveness. Strategic planning includes elements of court governance, data collection, management, analysis, sharing; and sustainable court governance models that drive decision-making. Strategic plans and outcomes must be communicated to judges, court staff, justice partners, and the public.

- Workforce Development – State courts require a workforce that is adaptable to public demands for services. SJI supports projects that focus on the tools needed to enable judges, court managers, and staff to be innovative, forward thinking court leaders.

[1] See guidance on unallowable uses of SJI funds regarding equipment, software, and internet access.

GRANT TYPES

SJI supports five types of grants: Project, Technical Assistance (TA), Curriculum Adaptation and Training (CAT), Strategic Initiatives Grants (SIG) Program, and the Education Support Program (ESP). A brief description of each type of grant is below.

Project Grant

Project Grants are intended to support innovative education and training, research and evaluation, demonstration, and technical assistance projects that can improve the administration of justice in state courts locally or nationwide. State court applicants may request up to $300,000 for 36 months. Local court applicants may request up to $200,000 for 24 months. Examples of expenses not covered by Project Grants include the salaries or benefits of full-or part-time court employees. Funding may not be used for the ordinary, routine operations of court systems.

All applicants for Project Grants must contribute a cash match greater than or equal to the SJI award amount. This means that grant awards by SJI must be matched at least dollar for dollar by grant applicants. Applicants may contribute the required cash match directly or in cooperation with third parties. Funding from other federal departments or agencies may not be used for cash match.

Technical Assistance (TA) Grant

TA Grants are intended to provide state or local courts, or regional court associations, with sufficient support to obtain expert assistance to diagnose a problem, develop a response to that problem, and implement any needed changes. TA Grants may not exceed $75,000 and 12 months in duration. In calculating project duration, applicants are cautioned to fully consider the time required to issue a request for proposals, negotiate a contract with the selected provider, and execute the project. Funds may not be used for salaries or benefits of full-or part-time court employees.

Applicants for TA Grants are required to contribute a total match (cash and in-kind) of not less than 50 percent of the SJI award amount, of which 20 percent must be cash. For example, an applicant seeking a $50,000 TA grant must provide a $25,000 match, of which up to $20,000 can be in-kind and not less than $5,000 must be cash. Funding from other federal departments and agencies may not be used for cash match.

Curriculum Adaptation and Training (CAT) Grant

CAT Grants are intended to: 1) Enable courts or national court associations to modify and adapt model curricula, course modules, or conference programs to meet states' or local jurisdictions' educational needs; train instructors to present portions or all of the curricula; and pilot-test them to determine their appropriateness, quality, and effectiveness, or 2) conduct judicial branch education and training programs, led by either expert or in-house personnel, designed to prepare judges and court personnel for innovations, reforms, and/or new technologies recently adopted by grantee courts. CAT Grants may not exceed $40,000 and 12 months in duration. Examples of expenses not covered by CAT Grants include the salaries or benefits of full-or part-time court employees.

Applicants for CAT Grants are required to contribute a total match (cash and in-kind) of not less than 50 percent of the SJI award amount, of which 20 percent must be cash. For example, an applicant seeking a $30,000 CAT grant must provide a $15,000 match, of which up to $12,000 can be in-kind and not less than $3,000 must be cash. Funding from other federal departments and agencies may not be used for cash match.

Strategic Initiatives Grant (SIG)

The SIG program provides SJI with the flexibility to address national court issues as they occur and develop solutions to those problems. This is an innovative approach where SJI uses its expertise and the expertise and knowledge of its grantees to address key issues facing state courts across the United States.

The funding is used for grants or contractual services and is handled at the discretion of the SJI Board of Directors and staff. SJI requires the submission of a concept paper prior to the full application process. Only applicants that submit an approved concept paper will be invited to submit a full application for funding. Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to contact SJI prior to submitting a concept paper for guidance on this initial step.

Education Support Program (ESP) for Judges and Court Managers

The Education Support Program (ESP) is intended to enhance the skills, knowledge, and abilities of state court judges and court managers by enabling them to attend out-of-state, or to enroll in online, educational and training programs sponsored by national and state providers that they could not otherwise attend or take online because of limited state, local, and personal budgets. The program only covers the cost of tuition up to a maximum of $1,000 per course.

The ESP is administered by the National Judicial College (NJC) and the National Center for State Courts/Institute for Court Management (ICM), in partnership with SJI. For NJC courses, register online at www.judges.org/courses. For ICM courses, register online at https://www.ncsc.org/education-and-careers/icm-courses. During the respective registration processes, each website will ask if you need a scholarship to participate. Follow the online instructions to request tuition assistance.

APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

This section describes in detail what an application must include. An applicant should anticipate that if it fails to submit an application that contains all the specified project components, it may negatively affect the review of the application. Applicants must use the SJI GMS to submit all applications and post-award documents. The SJI GMS is accessible at https://gms.sji.gov.

Application Components

Applicants for SJI Grants must submit the following forms and/or documents via the SJI GMS:

1. **Grant Application:** The application form requests basic information regarding the proposed project, the applicant, and the total amount of funding

requested from SJI. Submission of the application indicates that the submission is by an individual authorized to certify on behalf of the applicant that the information contained in the application is true and complete; that submission of the application has been authorized by the applicant; and that if funding for the proposed project is approved, the applicant will comply with the requirements and conditions of the award, including the assurances set forth below. Applicants must include a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) to submit an application. Information regarding UEI and SAM.gov registration is available here: UEI and SAM.

2. **Certificate of State Approval:** An application from a state or local court must include a copy of the Approval Form (available in GMS) signed by the state's chief justice or state court administrator. The signature denotes that the proposed project has been approved by the state's highest court or the agency or council it has designated. It denotes further that, if applicable, a cash match reduction has been requested, and that if SJI approves funding for the project, the court or the specified designee will receive, administer, and be accountable for the awarded funds.

3. **Budget & Budget Narrative:** Applicants must provide a detailed budget and a budget narrative providing an explanation of the basis for the amounts in each budget category. If funds from other sources are required to conduct the project, either as match or to support other aspects of the project, the source, current status of the request, and anticipated decision date must be provided.

4. **Assurances:** The form lists the statutory, regulatory, and policy requirements with which recipients of SJI funds must comply.

5. **Disclosure of Lobbying Activities:** Applicants are required to disclose whether they, or another entity that is part of the same organization as the applicant, have advocated a position before Congress on any issue, and to identify the specific subjects of their lobbying efforts.

6. **Project Abstract:** The abstract must highlight the purposes, goals, methods, and anticipated benefits of the proposed project. It must not exceed 1 single-spaced page and must be uploaded in GMS.

7. **Program Narrative:** The program narrative for an application may not exceed 25 double-spaced pages on 8½ by 11-inch paper with 1-inch margins, using a standard 12-point font. The pages must be numbered. This page limit does not include the forms, the abstract, the budget narrative, and any additional attachments. The program narrative must address the following, noting any specific areas to address by grant type:

    a. **Statement of Need:** The applicant must explain the critical need facing the applicant, and how SJI funds will enable the applicant to meet this critical need.

The applicant must also explain why state or local resources are not sufficient to fully support the costs of the project.

The applicant must provide a verified source for the data that supports the statement of the problem (i.e., federal, state, and local databases). The discussion must include specific references to the relevant literature and to the experience in the field. SJI continues to make all grant reports and most grant products available online through the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) Library and Digital Archive. Applicants are required to conduct a search of the NCSC Library and Digital Archive on the topic areas they are addressing. This search must include SJI-funded grants, and previous projects not supported by SJI. Searches for SJI grant reports and other state court resources begin with the NCSC Library section. Applicants must discuss the results of their research; how they plan to incorporate the previous work into their proposed project; and if the project will differentiate from prior work.

i. *Project grants*: If the project is to be conducted in any specific location(s), the applicant must discuss the particular needs of the project site(s) to be addressed by the project and why those needs are not being met through the use of existing programs, procedures, services, or other resources.

   If the project is not site-specific, the applicant must discuss the problems that the proposed project would address, and why existing programs, procedures, services, or other resources cannot adequately resolve those problems. In addition, the applicant must describe how, if applicable, the project will be sustained in the future through existing resources.

ii. *TA grants*: The applicant must explain the problem to be addressed, why expert assistance is needed, and why state or local resources are unavailable to support the provision of expert assistance to diagnose the problem, develop a response and implement any recommended changes. The applicant must explain how the recommendations will be sustained with existing resources in the future.

iii. *CAT grants (curriculum adaptation):* The applicant must explain why state or local resources are unable to fully support the modification and presentation of the model curriculum. The applicant must also describe the potential for replicating or integrating the adapted curriculum in the future using state or local funds once it has been successfully adapted and tested.

iv. *CAT grant (training)*: The applicant must describe the court reform or initiative prompting the need for training. The applicant must also discuss how the proposed training will help the applicant implement planned changes at the court, and why state or local resources are not sufficient to fully support the costs of the required training.

v. *SIG grants*: Applicants must detail the origin of the project (i.e., requested by SJI or a request to SJI) and provide a detailed description about the issue of national impact the proposed project will address, including any evaluations, reports, resolutions, or other data to support the need statement.

b. **Project Description and Objectives:** The applicant must include a clear, concise statement of what the proposed project is intended to accomplish and how those objectives will be met. The applicant must delineate the tasks to be performed in achieving the project objectives and the methods to be used for accomplishing each task.

The applicant must describe how the proposed project addresses one or more Priority Investment Areas. If the project does not address one or more Priority Investment Areas, the applicant must provide an explanation why not.

i. *Project grants*: The applicant must include detailed descriptions of tasks, methods, and evaluations. For example:

- Research and evaluation projects: The applicant must include the data sources, data collection strategies, variables to be examined, and analytic procedures to be used for conducting the research or evaluation and ensuring the validity and general applicability of the results. For projects involving human subjects, the discussion of methods must address the procedures for obtaining respondents' informed consent, ensuring the respondents' privacy and freedom from risk or harm, and protecting others who are not the subjects of research but would be affected by the research. If the potential exists for risk or harm to human subjects, a discussion must be included that explains the value of the proposed research and the methods to be used to minimize or eliminate such risk. Refer to the *Human Subject Protection* section of the SJI Grant Management Guide for additional information.

- Education and training projects: The applicant must include the adult education techniques to be used in designing and presenting the program, including the teaching/ learning objectives of the educational design, the teaching methods to be used, and the opportunities for structured interaction among the participants; how faculty would be recruited, selected, and trained; the proposed number and length of the conferences, courses, seminars, or workshops to be conducted and the estimated number of persons who would attend them; the materials to be provided and how they would be developed; and the cost to participants.

- Demonstration projects: The applicant must include the demonstration sites and the reasons they were selected, or if the sites have not been chosen, how they would be identified and their cooperation obtained; and how the program or procedures would be implemented and monitored.

- Technical assistance projects: The applicant must explain the types of assistance that would be provided; the particular issues and problems for which assistance would be provided; the type of assistance determined; how suitable providers would be selected and briefed; and how reports would be reviewed.

ii. *TA grants*: The applicant must identify which organization or individual will be hired to provide the assistance, and how the consultant was selected. The applicant must describe the tasks the consultant will perform, and how the tasks will be accomplished. The applicant must address the following questions:

- What specific tasks will the consultant(s) and court staff undertake?
- What is the schedule for completion of each required task and the entire project?
- How will the applicant oversee the project and provide guidance to the consultant, and who at the court or regional court association would be responsible for coordinating all project tasks and submitting quarterly progress and financial status reports?
- If a consultant has not yet been identified, the applicant must describe the procedures and criteria that will be used to select the consultant (applicants are expected to follow their jurisdictions' normal procedures for procuring consultant services)?

- If the consultant has been identified, the applicant must provide a letter from that individual or organization documenting interest in and availability for the project, as well as the consultant's ability to complete the assignment within the proposed time frame and for the proposed cost. The consultant must agree to submit a detailed written report to the court and SJI upon completion of the technical assistance.

The applicant must describe the steps have been or will be taken to facilitate implementation of the consultant's recommendations upon completion of the technical assistance.

iii. *CAT grants (curriculum adaptation)*: The applicant must provide the title of the curriculum that will be adapted and identify the entity that originally developed the curriculum. Applicants must allow at least 90 days between the potential award date and the date of the proposed program to allow

sufficient time for planning. This period of time must be reflected in the project timeline. The applicant must also address the following questions:

- Why is this education program needed at the present time?
- What are the project's goals?
- What are the learning objectives of the adapted curriculum?
- What program components would be implemented, and what types of modifications, if any, are anticipated in length, format, learning objectives, teaching methods, or content?
- Who would be responsible for adapting the model curriculum?
- Who would the participants be, how many would there be, how would they be recruited, and from where would they come (e.g., from a single local jurisdiction, from across the state, from a multi-state region, from across the nation)?

The applicant must provide the proposed timeline, including the project start and end dates, the date(s) the judicial branch education program will be presented, and the process that will be used to modify and present the program. The applicant must also identify who will serve as faculty, and how they were selected, in addition to the measures taken to facilitate subsequent presentations of the program.

iv. *CAT grants (training):* The applicant must identify the tasks the trainer(s) will be expected to perform, which organization or individual will be hired, and, if in-house personnel are not the trainers, how the trainer will be selected. If a trainer has not yet been identified, the applicant must describe the procedures and criteria that will be used to select the trainer. In addition, the applicant must address the following questions:

- What specific tasks would the trainer and court staff or regional court association members undertake?
- What presentation methods will be used?
- What is the schedule for completion of each required task and the entire project?
- How will the applicant oversee the project and provide guidance to the trainer, and who at the court or affiliated with the regional court association would be responsible for coordinating all project tasks and submitting quarterly progress and financial status reports?
- If the trainer has been identified, the applicant must provide a letter from that individual or organization documenting interest in and availability for the project, as well as the trainer's ability to complete the assignment within the proposed time frame and for the proposed cost.

The applicant must explain what steps have been or will be taken to coordinate the implementation of the training. For example, if the support

or cooperation of specific court or regional court association officials or committees, other agencies, funding bodies, organizations, or a court other than the applicant will be needed to adopt the reform and initiate the training proposed, how will the applicant secure their involvement in the development and implementation of the training?

v. *SIG grants*: The applicant must expand upon the project description and objectives described in the approved concept paper. Any and all feedback and questions submitted by the Board and SJI Staff during the review of the concept paper must also be incorporated into the project design.

c. **Dissemination Plan:** The application must explain how and to whom the products would be disseminated; describe how they would benefit the state courts, including how they could be used by judges and court personnel; identify development, production, and dissemination costs covered by the project budget; and present the basis on which products and services developed or provided under the grant would be offered to the court community and the public at large (i.e., whether products would be distributed at no cost to recipients, or if costs are involved, the reason for charging recipients and the estimated price of the product). Ordinarily, applicants must schedule all product preparation and distribution activities within the project period.

The type of product to be prepared depends on the nature of the project. For example, in most instances, the products of a research, evaluation, or demonstration project must include an article summarizing the project findings that is publishable in a journal serving the courts community nationally, an executive summary that would be disseminated to the project's primary audience, or both. Applicants proposing to conduct empirical research or evaluation projects with national import must describe how they would make their data available for secondary analysis after the grant period.

The curricula and other products developed through education and training projects must be designed for use by others and again by the original participants in the course of their duties. Applicants proposing to develop web-based products must provide for sending a notice and description of the document to the appropriate audiences to alert them to the availability of the website or electronic product (i.e., a written report with a reference to the web site).

Applicants must submit a final draft of all written grant products to SJI for review and approval at least 30 days before the products are submitted for publication or reproduction. For products in website or multimedia format, applicants must provide for SJI review of the product at the treatment, script, rough-cut, and final stages of development, or their equivalents. No grant funds may be obligated for publication or reproduction of a final grant product without the written approval of SJI. Project products must be submitted to SJI in electronically in HTML or PDF format.

Applicants must also include in all project products a prominent acknowledgment that support was received from SJI and a disclaimer paragraph such as ''This [document, film, videotape, etc.] was developed under [grant/cooperative agreement] number SJI–[insert number] from the State Justice Institute. The points of view expressed are those of the [author(s), filmmaker(s), etc.] and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the State Justice Institute.'' The ''SJI'' logo must appear on the front cover of a written product, or in the opening frames of a website or other multimedia product, unless SJI approves another placement. The SJI logo can be downloaded from SJI's website at the bottom of the Grants page.

d. **Staff Capability and Organizational Capacity:** An applicant that is not a state or local court and has not received a grant from SJI within the past three years must indicate whether it is either a national non-profit organization controlled by, operating in conjunction with, and serving the judicial branches of state governments, or a national non-profit organization for the education and training of state court judges and support personnel. If the applicant is a non-judicial unit of federal, state, or local government, it must explain whether the proposed services could be adequately provided by non-governmental entities.

Applicants that have not received a grant from SJI within the past three years must include a statement describing their capacity to administer grant funds, including the financial systems used to monitor project expenditures (and income, if any), and a summary of their past experience in administering grants, as well as any resources or capabilities that they have that would particularly assist in the successful completion of the project.

Unless requested otherwise, an applicant that has received a grant from SJI within the past three years must describe only the changes in its organizational capacity, tax status, or financial capability that may affect its capacity to administer a grant. If the applicant is a non-profit organization (other than a university), it must also provide documentation of its 501(c) tax-exempt status as determined by the Internal Revenue Service and a copy of a current certified audit report. For purposes of this requirement, ''current'' means no earlier than two years prior to the present calendar year.

The applicant must include a summary of the training and experience of the key staff members and consultants that qualify them for conducting and managing the proposed project. Resumes of identified staff must be attached to the application. If one or more key staff members and consultants are not known at the time of the application, a description of the criteria that would be used to select persons for these positions must be included. The applicant also must identify the person who would be responsible for managing and reporting on the financial aspects of the proposed project.

e. **Evaluation:** Projects must include an evaluation plan to determine whether the project met its objectives. The evaluation must be designed to provide an objective and independent assessment of the effectiveness or usefulness of the training or services provided; the impact of the procedures, technology, or services tested; or the validity and applicability of the research conducted. The evaluation plan must be appropriate to the type of project proposed considering the nature, scope, and magnitude of the project.

f. **Sustainability:** Describe how the project will be sustained after SJI assistance ends. The sustainability plan must describe how current collaborations and evaluations will be used to leverage ongoing resources. SJI encourages applicants to ensure sustainability by coordinating with local, state, and other federal resources.

Prohibited uses of SJI funds

To ensure that funds made available under this chapter are used to supplement and improve the operation of State courts, rather than to support ***basic court services,*** funds shall not be used—

(1) to supplant State or local funds currently supporting a program or activity; or

(2) to construct court facilities or structures, except to remodel existing facilities to demonstrate new architectural or technological techniques, or to provide temporary facilities for new personnel or for personnel involved in a demonstration or experimental program.

Examples of ***basic court services*** include:

- Hiring of personnel
- Purchase and/or maintenance of equipment
- Purchase of software and/or licenses
- Purchase of internet access or service
- Supplies to support the day-to-day operations of courts

The final determination of what constitutes basic court services is made by SJI and is not negotiable. Applicants are encouraged to contact SJI Staff to discuss any questions related to this section prior to or during the application process.

Likewise, meals and refreshments are not allowable costs. This applies to all awards, including contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements.

Trinkets (items such as hats, mugs, portfolios, t-shirts, coins, gift bags, gift cards, etc.) may not be purchased with SJI grant funding.

8. **Budget and Matching State Contribution:** Applicants must complete a budget in the SJI GMS and upload a budget narrative. The budget narrative must provide the basis for all project-related costs and the sources of any match, as required. The budget narrative must thoroughly and clearly describe every category of expense listed. SJI expects

proposed budgets to be complete, cost effective, and allowable (e.g., reasonable, allocable, and necessary for project activities).

i. *Personnel:* No grant funds or cash match may be used to pay the salary and related costs for a current or new employee of a court or other unit of government because such funds would constitute a supplantation of state or local funds in violation of 42 U.S.C. 10706(d)(1); this includes new employees hired specifically for the project. The salary and any related costs for a current or new employee of a court or other unit of government may only be accepted as in-kind match. For non-court or other unit of government applicants, the application must set forth the percentages of time to be devoted by the individuals who would staff the proposed project, the annual salary of each of those persons, and the number of work days per year used for calculating the percentages of time or daily rates of those individuals. The applicant must explain any deviations from current rates or established written organizational policies.

ii. *Fringe Benefit Computation*: For non-governmental entities, the applicant must provide a description of the fringe benefits provided to employees. If percentages are used, the authority for such use must be presented, as well as a description of the elements included in the determination of the percentage rate.

iii. *Consultant/Contractual Services and Honoraria:* The applicant must describe the tasks each consultant would perform, the total amount to be paid to each consultant, the basis for compensation rates (e.g., the number of days multiplied by the daily consultant rates), and the method for selection. Prior written SJI approval is required for any consultant rate in excess of $800 per day; SJI funds may not be used to pay a consultant more than $1,100 per day. Honorarium payments must be justified in the same manner as consultant payments.

iv. *Travel:* Transportation costs and per diem rates must comply with the policies of the applicant organization. If the applicant does not have an established travel policy, then travel rates must be consistent with those established by the federal government. The budget narrative must include an explanation of the rate used, including the components of the per diem rate and the basis for the transportation expenses. The purpose of the travel must also be included in the narrative.

v. *Equipment:* Grant funds cannot be used strictly for the purpose of purchasing equipment. Equipment purchases to support basic court operations will not be approved. In limited instances, grant funds may be used to purchase only the equipment necessary to demonstrate a new technological application in a court. The applicant must describe the equipment to be purchased or leased and explain why the acquisition of that equipment is essential to accomplish the project's goals and objectives. The narrative must clearly identify which equipment is to be leased and which is to be purchased. The method of procurement must also be described.

vi. *Supplies:* Supplies cannot be purchased to support the day-to-day operations of a court. The applicant must provide a general description of the supplies necessary to accomplish the goals and objectives of the grant. In addition, the applicant must provide the basis for the amount requested for this expenditure category.

vii. *Construction:* Construction expenses are prohibited.

viii. *Postage:* Postage costs for project-related mailings, including distribution of the final product(s), must be described in the budget narrative. The cost of special mailings, such as for a survey or for announcing a workshop, must be distinguished from routine mailing costs. The basis for all postage must be included in the budget narrative. Electronic dissemination of information is preferred, therefore, funds for postage must be minimal.

ix. *Printing/Photocopying:* Costs for printing or photocopying project documents, reports, and publications must be included in the budget narrative, along with the basis used to calculate these amounts. Electronic dissemination of information is preferred, therefore, funds for printing/photocopying must be minimal.

x. *Indirect Costs:* Indirect costs are only applicable to organizations that are not state courts or government agencies. Recoverable indirect costs are limited to no more than 75 percent of a grantee's direct personnel costs, i.e. salaries plus fringe benefits. Applicants must describe the indirect cost rates applicable to the grant in detail. If costs often included within an indirect cost rate are charged directly (e.g., a percentage of the time of senior managers to supervise project activities), the applicant must specify that these costs are not included within its approved indirect cost rate. If the applicant has an indirect cost rate or allocation plan approved by any federal granting agency, a copy of the approved rate agreement must be attached to the application. Refer to the SJI Grant Management Guide for additional details.

xi. *Matching Requirements:* SJI grants require cash and/or in-kind matches as outlined below. A match is the portion of project costs not borne by SJI. Match includes both cash and in-kind contributions. Cash match is the direct outlay of funds by the grantee or a third party to support the project. Other federal department and agency funding may not be used for cash match. In-kind match consists of contributions of time and/or services of current staff members, new employees, space, supplies, etc., made to the project by the grantee or others (e.g., advisory board members) working directly on the project or that portion of the grantee's federally-approved indirect cost rate that exceeds the limit of permitted charges (75 percent of salaries and benefits).

The grantee is responsible for ensuring that the total amount of match proposed is contributed. If a proposed contribution is not fully met, SJI may reduce the award amount accordingly, to maintain the ratio originally provided for in the award agreement. Match must be expended at the same rate as SJI funding.

1) *Project grants:* All applicants for Project Grants must contribute a cash match greater than or equal to the SJI award amount. This means that grant awards by SJI must be matched at least dollar for dollar by grant applicants. For example, if the total proposed project is $200,000, SJI provides $100,000 in funds and the applicant match must be at least $100,000. Applicants may contribute the required cash match directly or in cooperation with third parties.

2) *TA grants:* Applicants for TA Grants are required to contribute a total match (cash and in-kind) of not less than 50 percent of the SJI award amount, of which 20 percent must be cash. For example, an applicant seeking a $50,000 TA grant must provide a $25,000 match, of which up to $20,000 can be in-kind and not less than $5,000 must be cash.

3) *CAT grants:* Applicants for TA Grants are required to contribute a total match (cash and in-kind) of not less than 50 percent of the SJI award amount, of which 20 percent must be cash. For example, an applicant seeking a $30,000 CAT grant must provide a $15,000 match, of which up to $12,000 can be in-kind and not less than $3,000 must be cash.

4) *SIG grants:* State and local courts and non-court units of government must provide a dollar for dollar cash match for SIG Projects. Matching funds may not be required for SIG projects that are awarded to non-court or non-governmental entities.

9. **Letters of Support:** If the support or cooperation of agencies, funding bodies, organizations, or courts other than the applicant would be needed in order for the consultant to perform the required tasks, written assurances of such support or cooperation must accompany the application letter. Applicants may also submit memorandums of agreement/understanding, as appropriate.

10. **Project Timeline:** A Project Timeline detailing each project objective, activity, expected completion date, and responsible person or organization must be included. The plan must include the starting and completion date for each task; the time commitments to the project of key staff and their responsibilities regarding each project task; and the procedures that would ensure that all tasks are performed on time, within budget, and at the highest level of quality. In preparing the project timeline, applicants must make certain that all project activities, including publication or reproduction of project products and their initial dissemination, would occur within the proposed project period. The timeline must also provide for the submission of Quarterly Progress and Financial Reports within 30 days after the close of each calendar quarter as well as submission of all final closeout documents. The project timeline may be included in the program narrative or provided as a separate attachment.

11. **Other Attachments:** Resumes of key project staff may also be included. Additional background material must be attached only if it is essential to impart a clear understanding of the proposed project. Numerous and lengthy appendices are strongly discouraged.

Application Review Information

Selection Criteria

In addition to the criteria detailed below, SJI will consider whether the applicant is a state or local court, a national court support or education organization, a non-court unit of government, or other type of entity eligible to receive grants under SJI's enabling legislation; the availability of financial assistance from other sources for the project; the diversity of subject matter, geographic diversity; the level and nature of the match that would be provided; reasonableness of the proposed budget; the extent to which the proposed project would also benefit the federal courts or help state or local courts enforce federal constitutional and legislative requirements; and the level of appropriations available to SJI in the current year and the amount expected to be available in succeeding fiscal years, when determining which projects to support.

Project Grant Applications

Project Grant applications will be rated based on the criteria set forth below:

1. Soundness of the methodology
2. Demonstration of need for the project
3. Appropriateness of the proposed evaluation design
4. If applicable, the key findings and recommendations of the most recent evaluation and the proposed responses to those findings and recommendations
5. Applicant's management plan and organizational capabilities
6. Qualifications of the project's staff
7. Products and benefits resulting from the project, including the extent to which the project will have long-term benefits for state courts across the nation
8. Degree to which the findings, procedures, training, technology, or other results of the project can be transferred to other jurisdictions
9. Reasonableness of the proposed budget
10. Demonstration of cooperation and support of other agencies that may be affected by the project

Technical Assistance (TA) Grant Applications

TA Grant applications will be rated based on the following criteria:

1. Whether the assistance would address a critical need of the applicant
2. Soundness of the technical assistance approach to the problem
3. Qualifications of the consultant(s) to be hired or the specific criteria that will be used to select the consultant(s)
4. Commitment of the court or association to act on the consultant's recommendations
5. Reasonableness of the proposed budget

Curriculum Adaptation and Training (CAT) Grant Applications

CAT Grant applications will be rated based on the following criteria:

1. Goals and objectives of the proposed project
2. How the training would address a critical need of the court or association
3. Need for outside funding to support the program
4. Soundness of the approach in achieving the project's educational or training objectives
5. Integration of distance learning and technology in project design and delivery
6. Qualifications of the trainer(s) to be hired or the specific criteria that will be used to select the trainer(s) *(training project)*
7. Likelihood of effective implementation and integration of the modified curriculum into the state or local jurisdiction's ongoing educational programming *(curriculum adaptation project)*
8. Commitment of the court or association to the training program *(training project)*
9. Expressions of interest by judges and/or court personnel, as demonstrated by letters of support

Strategic Initiative Grant (SIG) Applications

SIG applications will be rated based on the following criteria:

1. Goals and objectives of the proposed project
2. Demonstration of need for the project
3. Degree to which the project addresses a current national court issue
4. Level of innovation in addressing the identified need
5. Potential impact on the court community
6. Qualifications of the consultant(s) engaged to manage the project

Review Process

SJI reviews the application to make sure that the information presented is reasonable, understandable, measurable, and achievable, as well as consistent with the grant guides. Applications must meet basic minimum requirements. Although specific requirements may vary by grant type, the following are common requirements applicable to all SJI grant applications:

- Must be submitted by an eligible type of applicant
- Must request funding within funding constraints of each grant type (if applicable)
- Must be within statutorily allowable expenditures
- Must include all required forms and documents

SJI's Board of Directors reviews all applications and makes final funding decisions. The decision to fund a project is solely that of the Board of Directors.

Notification of Board Decision

The Chairman of the Board signs grant awards on behalf of SJI. SJI will send notify applicants regarding Board decisions to award, defer, or deny their respective applications. If requested, SJI conveys the key issues and questions that arose during the review process. A decision by the

Board to deny an application may not be appealed, but it does not prohibit resubmission of a proposal in a subsequent funding cycle.

Response to Notification of Award

Applicants have 30 days from the date notifying them that the Board has grant their award to respond to any revisions requested by the Board. If the requested revisions (or a reasonable schedule for submitting such revisions) have not been submitted to SJI within 30 days after notification, the award may be rescinded, and the application presented to the Board for reconsideration. Special Conditions, in the form of incentives or sanctions, may also be used in other situations.

HOW TO APPLY

Applicants must use the SJI Grants Management System (SJI GMS) to submit all applications and post-award documents. SJI urges applicants to submit applications at least 72 hours prior to the application due date, in order to allow time for the applicant to receive an application acceptance message and to correct in a timely fashion any problems that may arise, such as missing or incomplete forms. Files must be in .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx, .pdf, .jpg, or .png format. Individual file size cannot exceed 5Mb.

Submission Steps

Applicants (except for ESP) must register with the SJI GMS to submit applications for funding consideration. Below are the basic steps for submission:

1. Access the SJI GMS and complete the information required to create an account.
2. If you already have an account, log in and create a new application.
3. Complete all required forms and upload all required documents:
    a. Application Form
    b. Certificate of State Approval
    c. Budget and Budget Narrative
    d. Assurances
    e. Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
    f. Project Abstract
    g. Program Narrative
    h. Attachments
        i. Letters of Support
        ii. Project Timeline
        iii. Resumes
        iv. Indirect Cost Approval
        v. Other Attachments
4. Certify and submit the application to SJI for review.

POST AWARD REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

All required reports and documents must be submitted via the SJI GMS. Refer to the Grant Management Guide for additional details.

Quarterly Reporting Requirements

Recipients of SJI funds must submit Quarterly Progress and Financial Status Reports within 30 days of the close of each calendar quarter (that is, no later than January 30, April 30, July 30, and October 30).

Programmatic Progress Reports: Program Progress Reports shall include a narrative description of project activities during the calendar quarter, the relationship between those activities and the task schedule and objectives set forth in the approved application or an approved adjustment thereto, any significant problem areas that have developed and how they will be resolved, and the activities scheduled during the next reporting period. Failure to comply with the requirements of this provision could result in the termination of a grantee's award.

Financial Reporting: A Financial Status Report is required from all grantees for each active quarter on a calendar-quarter basis. This report is due within 30 days after the close of the calendar quarter. It is designed to provide financial information relating to SJI funds, state and local matching shares, project income, and any other sources of funds for the project, as well as information on obligations and outlays.

Request for Reimbursement of Funds

Awardees will receive funds on a reimbursable, U.S. Treasury ''check-issued'' or electronic funds transfer (EFT) basis. Upon receipt, review, and approval of a Request for Reimbursement by SJI, payment will be issued directly to the grantee or its designated fiscal agent. Requests for reimbursements, along with the instructions for its preparation, and the SF 3881 Automated Clearing House (ACH/Miscellaneous Payment Enrollment Form for EFT) are available in the SJI GMS.

Accounting System: Awardees are responsible for establishing and maintaining an adequate system of accounting and internal controls and for ensuring that an adequate system exists for each of its sub-grantees and contractors. An acceptable and adequate accounting system:

1) Properly accounts for receipt of funds under each grant awarded and the expenditure of funds for each grant by category of expenditure (including matching contributions and project income)
2) Assures that expended funds are applied to the appropriate budget category included within the approved grant
3) Presents and classifies historical costs of the grant as required for budgetary and evaluation purposes
4) Provides cost and property controls to assure optimal use of grant funds

5) Is integrated with a system of internal controls adequate to safeguard the funds and assets covered, check the accuracy and reliability of the accounting data, promote operational efficiency, and assure conformance with any general or special conditions of the grant
6) Meets the prescribed requirements for periodic financial reporting of operations
7) Provides financial data for planning, control, measurement, and evaluation of direct and indirect costs

Final Progress Report

The Final Progress Report must describe the project activities during the final calendar quarter of the project and the close-out period, including to whom project products have been disseminated; provide a summary of activities during the entire project; specify whether all the objectives set forth in the approved application or an approved adjustment have been met and, if any of the objectives have not been met, explain why not; and discuss what, if anything, could have been done differently that might have enhanced the impact of the project or improved its operation. In addition, grantees are required to submit electronic copies of the final products related to the project (e.g., reports, curriculum, etc.). These reporting requirements apply at the conclusion of every grant.