

Understanding the Second Chance Act

Adult Mentoring Grants (Section 211)

Background

On April 9, 2008, President Bush signed the Second Chance Act ([P.L. 110-199](#)) into law. The bill received bipartisan support from both chambers of Congress and a broad spectrum of leaders representing state and local government, law enforcement, corrections, and courts. This first-of-its-kind legislation authorizes various grants to government agencies and nonprofit organizations to provide employment assistance, substance abuse treatment, housing, family programming, mentoring, victims support, and other services that can help reduce recidivism.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), U.S. Department of Justice, released a [mentoring grant solicitation for adult populations](#) on April 23, 2009, and applications are due on May 21, 2009.¹ This fact sheet is intended to help nonprofit organizations and Indian tribes prepare their applications. This fact sheet is not part of the official solicitation, and applicants should carefully read the BJA materials, which describe the forms that must be completed and all criteria that must be met to be eligible for the mentoring grants.²

Section 211

Section 211 of the Second Chance Act (42 U.S.C. § 17531) authorizes the U.S. Department of Justice to make grants to nonprofit organizations and Indian tribes for the purpose of providing mentoring and other transitional services essential to reintegrating individuals released from prisons or jails into the community. The mentoring grants are *authorized* at \$15 million per year, though the annual appropriations process will determine the actual funding level of the program. In fiscal year 2009, \$10 million was appropriated for the mentoring grant program.

Who Can Apply?

Nonprofit organizations and Indian tribes may apply for grants under the BJA solicitation.

¹ The solicitation is available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/grant/09SecondChanceMentoringSol.pdf.

² For information about other grant programs authorized by the Second Chance Act, see www.reentrypolicy.org/government_affairs/second_chance_act.

Allowable Uses

Funding under this solicitation is available to help nonprofit organizations and federally recognized Indian tribes implement mentoring projects to promote the safe and successful reintegration into the community of individuals who have been incarcerated. Funding is only available for projects serving individuals aged 18 and older convicted as an adult and imprisoned in a state, local, or tribal prison or jail.³

Application Requirements

Program components of a project proposal must include

- mentoring individuals during incarceration, through transition back to the community, and post-release;
- providing transitional services to assist in the reintegration of individuals into the community;
- training regarding “offender and victims issues.”

A project proposed under this solicitation must have a training component, which must be offered to potential and active mentors. The content should be designed to

- enhance their knowledge of the criminal justice system;
- acquaint them with appropriate governing policies and procedures of the correctional agencies or facilities referring clients;
- develop or improve their skills such as interpersonal communication to enhance their effectiveness as mentors;
- increase their awareness of and sensitivity to victim-related issues;
- provide them with information on available transitional services and referral procedures to other agencies or organizations;
- develop or enhance their level of professionalism and adherence to accepted ethical standards of practice.

Applicants must also provide a plan to collect data and report annually on the progress of their project at achieving

- reductions in recidivism rates;
- decreases in crime;
- increases in employment and enrollment in educational programs;
- reductions in violations of conditions of supervised release;
- increases in payment of child support;
- increases in housing opportunities;
- reductions in drug and alcohol abuse;
- increases in participation in substance abuse and mental health services.

³ The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), U.S. Department of Justice, has released a solicitation for mentoring grants for juvenile populations. That solicitation is available at ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/grants/solicitations/FY2009/SecondChanceMentoring.pdf.

Priority Considerations

The Second Chance Act directs the U.S. Department of Justice to give priority consideration to applications that

- include a plan to implement activities that have been demonstrated effective in facilitating successful reentry;
- include a plan or strategy for recruiting, training and supervising or monitoring volunteer mentors;
- discuss the role of local governmental agencies, other nonprofit organizations, and community stakeholders that will collaborate on project implementation;
- provide a description of the evidence-based methodology to be used in the delivery of mentoring and other proposed transitional services;
- provide a description of how the project could be broadly replicated if demonstrated to be effective;
- include a discussion of the role of state or local corrections departments, community corrections agencies, and/or local jail systems in ensuring successful reentry and how mentoring, transitional, and training services provided under this project will be integrated into the overall reentry strategy;
- include a plan to promote the sustainability of the project once federal funding ceases.

Budget

- Contingent upon the availability of funds and the number of offenders projected to be served, awards of up to \$300,000 will be made.
- Awards will be for a period of up to 24 months with the ability for no-cost extensions.
- A grantee may be eligible for continued funding contingent upon the availability of funds and demonstration of adequate progress toward meeting established goals of the program.
- A match is not required, but applicants are strongly encouraged to provide a 25 percent in-kind match in the form of contributions of goods or services that are directly related to the purpose for which the grant was awarded. The applicant must identify the source of the 25 percent non-federal portion of the budget and how the in-kind match will be used.

For More Information

The [Council of State Governments Justice Center](#) is a national nonprofit organization that provides practical, nonpartisan advice and consensus-driven strategies, informed by available evidence, to increase public safety and strengthen communities. It established the [Reentry Policy Council](#) (RPC) in 2001 to assist state government officials grappling with the increasing number of people released from corrections facilities each year. The comprehensive *Report of the Reentry Policy Council*, published in 2005, includes 35 practical policy statements and recommendations to promote the safe and successful return of individuals from prison or jail to the community. The *Report* is available at www.reentrypolicy.org, along with other helpful publications, including a reentry resource guide that includes links to other practical guides, tools, and reference materials. If you have not already done so, you may subscribe to the RPC newsletter at www.reentrypolicy.org/subscribe. For more information about the Second Chance Act, please visit www.reentrypolicy.org or email scainfo@csg.org.