

Request for Board Action Details

File #: 2021-294

Type: Administrative Item **Status:** Passed

In control: Board of Commissioners

On agenda: 6/15/2021 **Final action:** 6/15/2021

Title: 2021 Violence Against Women Act Services, Training, Officers Prosecutors Special Projects Grant from the State of Minnesota

Sponsors: County Attorney's Office, Sheriff's Office

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments: 1. Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) STOP Grant Agreement, 2. Resolution

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
6/15/2021	1	Board of Commissioners	approved	Pass

Sponsor: County Attorney's Office

Title
2021 Violence Against Women Act Services, Training, Officers Prosecutors Special Projects Grant from the State of Minnesota

Recommendation

1. Ratify the Violence Against Women Act Services, Training, Officers Prosecutors Special Projects 2021 grant application to the Office of Justice Programs for effective law enforcement and prosecution services to combat violent crimes against women, including the crimes of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking.
2. Accept the Violence Against Women Act Services, Training, Officers Prosecutors Special Projects 2021 Grant and approve the grant agreement with the Office of Justice Programs for effective law enforcement and prosecution services for the period of April 1, 2021 through December 31, 2022 in the amount of \$350,000.
3. Authorize the Chair and Chief Clerk to execute the grant agreement.
4. Approve an increase in the personnel complement of the County Attorney's Office by 1.0 Full Time Equivalent Assistant County Attorney.
5. Approve an increase in the personnel complement of the Sheriff's Office by 1.0 Full Time Equivalent Deputy Sheriff.

Background and Rationale

In January of 2021, the State of Minnesota through its Office of Justice Programs requested proposals for Violence Against Women Act Services, Training, Officers Prosecutors special projects grant (VAWA STOP) to develop and strengthen effective law enforcement and prosecution strategies to combat violent crimes against women, including the crimes of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking. These grant funds are for time-limited special projects to create systems change by improving the criminal justice system's response to violence against women and eligible projects must be a collaborative effort between criminal justice system agencies and community-based sexual assault and/or domestic violence programs.

Ramsey County's groundbreaking two-year study of 646 reported sexual assaults revealed that far too few

incidents of sexual violence are ever reported and, of those that are, only a small fraction result in perpetrators being charged and brought to justice. The study culminated in a report, Ramsey County Sexual Assault Systems Review (SASR) (<https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/leadership/county-attorneys-office/community-initiatives/sexual-assault-systems-review>), which outlined multiple recommendations to improve the justice system response to ensure victims feel supported in reporting to law enforcement. In response to the findings, Ramsey County, the City of Saint Paul and the City of Roseville reallocated resources to provide additional sexual assault investigators and Ramsey County created two key grant-funded positions to systemically improve the way law enforcement, prosecutors and justice system partners respond to sexual violence. To improve collaboration among the agencies, the Ramsey County Attorney's Office, Ramsey County Sheriff's Office, and Public Health's Sexual Offense Services developed an inter-agency coalition to facilitate victim-centered investigations, prosecutions and support. This enabled us to establish best-practice protocols by having prosecutors engage earlier with investigators and patrol officers.

To continue to build this more effective system of response, train staff across agencies, create performance measures and track success, the County Attorney's Office requested 2021 funding from the State of Minnesota through its Office of Justice Programs from the VAWA STOP special projects grant for two dedicated staff: 1.0 full-time equivalent investigator in Ramsey County Sheriff's Office and 1.0 full-time equivalent prosecutor in the Ramsey County Attorney's Office. Without these dedicated resources, both offices do not have the capacity to devote the time and expertise needed to change systems without negatively impacting caseloads. This grant enables the Sheriff's Office and County Attorney's Office to work collaboratively with the increased capacity of the Saint Paul Police and Public Health's Sexual Offense Services.

County Goals (Check those advanced by Action)

- Well-being Prosperity Opportunity Accountability

Racial Equity Impact

Racial disparities for victims of sexual assault in Ramsey County contributes to barriers in accessing the criminal justice system, following through investigation, and receiving a fair trial. Through multidisciplinary and collaborative efforts between the County Attorney's Office, Sheriff's Office, and Public Health's Sexual Offense Services, staff aim to reform the response to victim/survivors from systematically marginalized communities. The County's approach will involve initiatives that recognize the intersectionality of race and the criminal justice system, barriers that exist for Black/African American, Native/Indigenous communities, and people of color, and provide for public discourse and systematic reform.

Community Participation Level and Impact

This action will help county staff in collaboration with Ramsey County providing a robust response that promotes victim-centered investigations, prosecutions and support when residents need the County's support and respect the most. This grant will allow the Ramsey County Attorney's Office to engage with community advocacy and survivors on the system changes that are intended to be improved by this grant.

- Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower

Fiscal Impact

Grant revenues will fund this request and a \$350,000 grant will be established in the County Attorney's budget.

County Manager Comments

County Board approval is required for all grant awards over \$100,000 and to increase the personnel complement.

Last Previous Action

On June 16, 2020, the County Board approved the grant agreement extension for the 2019 Violence Against Women Act Services, Training, Officers Prosecutors Special Projects Grant through March 31, 2021 (Resolution B2020-122).

On September 24, 2019, the County Board proclaimed its support for the County's Attorney's Office's partnership with the City of Roseville to provide thorough, robust investigations to ensure victims of sexual assault are provided a compassionate and diligent response to their reports of sexual violence (Resolution B2019-225).

On March 12, 2019, the County Board accepted the 2019 Violence Against Women Act Services, Training, Officers Prosecutors Special Projects Grant and approved an increase in the personnel complement by two full-time equivalent positions to fund an Investigator and an Assistant County Attorney through 2020 (Resolution B2019-067).

On June 26, 2018, the County Board approved increase in personnel complement by two Full-Time Equivalent positions for Public Health SOS Program Assistants and budget authority to fund two new Saint Paul Police sexual assault investigators through 2019 from the County Attorney's civil asset forfeiture account. (Resolution B2018-186).

Attachments

1. Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) STOP Grant Agreement