

Attachment #1
FY 2025 JAG Program Narrative

Guided by our dedication to **smart justice**, enhanced **public safety**, and the holistic **well-being of our residents**, Franklin County seeks support to develop and/or expand programs that create safer, healthier, and more resilient communities. The FY 2025 Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) award will be administered by the Franklin County Office of Justice Policy and Programs, serving as the fiduciary and administrative agent on behalf of the cities of Columbus and Whitehall, and Franklin County, Ohio. Initiatives selected for funding support will align with the recently updated *Franklin County Criminal Justice Strategic Plan CY 2026 – 2029*, the *Columbus and Franklin County Addiction Plan 2020 – 2026 (CFCAP)*, the *Franklin County Community Health Improvement Plan 2026-2030*, the *Franklin County Reentry Advisory Board Strategic Plan 2025-2026*, and/or the *Franklin County Rising Out of Poverty Blueprint*. The JAG award and corresponding sub-recipient awards will be administered in accordance with local, state, and federal guidelines and statutes.

Capabilities and Competencies

The Franklin County Criminal Justice Planning Board serves as the local criminal justice coordinating council and is comprised of elected and appointed officials with critical roles within the criminal justice system (Judges, Sheriff, Police Chief, Safety Director, Probation, Corrections, Community Corrections, Faith-based, Victim, Public Defender, Prosecutor). The Board develops, adopts, and updates the Comprehensive Strategic Justice Plan every four years to support prevention and response to justice-related community conditions and emerging trends and conditions.

Franklin County and the cities of Columbus and Whitehall are deemed disparate by the Bureau of Justice Assistance and have historically filed a joint application. Because the Franklin County Office of Justice Policy and Programs (OJPP) serve as the regional planning unit for the

metropolitan area and is the administrative agency to the Franklin County Reentry Advisory Board and the Franklin County Criminal Justice Planning Board, of which the cities of Columbus and Whitehall have board representation, each of the jurisdictions has agreed to the Memorandum of Understanding outlining the proposed funding plan and designating OJPP as the applicant and fiscal agent for the JAG grant. Upon notice of award, the cities of Columbus and Whitehall will each receive sub-recipient awards based on the funding plan approved by the Memorandum of Understanding.

The Criminal Justice Planning Board is staffed by the metropolitan criminal justice planning agency (Office of Justice Policy & Programs (OJPP)), which represents all 42 local political subdivisions in Franklin County and is responsible for system-wide strategic justice planning, technical assistance, and efficient and effective application of local, state and federal grant funding. OJPP staff have extensive grants and project management experience overseeing large-scale, multi-agency, and multi-disciplinary initiatives including formula grants awarded through Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and Title II from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. In addition, OJPP has applied for and administered many large scale, multi partner discretionary grants through the Second Chance Act Addressing Needs of Incarcerated Parents and their Children, the Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program, and SAMHSA's Medication Assisted Treatment grant programs. OJPP staff are well versed in required local, state, and federal financial guidelines, OMB Cost Principles and Auditing standards, and procurement requirements, and all grant support staff are required to complete the Department of Justice Federal Financial Management training biennially. The programs supported through this grant will be implemented in alignment with key local strategic planning documents, ensuring that investments strengthen shared priorities and produce measurable, community-wide impact.

Recognizing the importance of sustainability planning early on, Franklin County will leverage multiple existing local, state, and federal funding streams to augment efforts seeded and/or continued with support from the FY 2025 JAG program. All funded projects will be tracked for fiscal and programmatic compliance and will be required to report fiscal and programmatic activity quarterly. Additionally, each sub-recipient will receive regular desktop monitoring and at minimum, one annual in-person monitoring visit.

Problem Statement

In developing the FY 2025 Justice Assistance Grant application, the following conditions were identified as key priority areas:

Key Issue #1:

VIOLENT CRIME: Despite notable declines in homicides committed in CY2025, homicides remain a key indicator of community safety and local data reflects continued persistent challenges requiring targeted interventions. Franklin County recorded 185 gun-related homicides from 2021 to 2025 with noted surges early in CY2026. Both Columbus and Whitehall experience violent-crime rates above the Ohio and national averages, with Whitehall reporting the highest per-capita rates at 10.33 per 1000 residents while Columbus reports a rate of 5.17 per 1,000 residents compared to Ohio at 3.36 per 1000 and the US at 4.8 per 1000 residents. (*Ohio Legislative Service Commission*) Youth and young adults ages 20 – 39 consistently make up the largest share of victims and perpetrators of violent crime.

Issue #2:

REENTRY and HOMELESSNESS: Pervasive barriers continue to prevent the successful re-integration of justice-involved individuals returning to Franklin County from local, state, and/or federal incarceration. Despite significant strides gained over the past five years, barriers still include exceptionally high rates of homelessness, high under/unemployment rates, lack of affordable housing, high poverty rates, behavioral health challenges, and physical health concerns. Of the CY2025 bookings in the Franklin County Jail, 2,468 individuals reported being homeless, an 8% increase from CY2024 and a considerable 13% increase from CY2023 bookings.

Issue #3:

JUVENILE CRIME: Nearly 55% more youth were sent to the Department of Youth Services from CY2022 to CY2023, and the Franklin County Juvenile Intervention Center is receiving record numbers of youth transported to the detention center. While the number of gun crimes for youth under the age of 18 is declining, the number of youth charged with stealing vehicles remains a consistent and persistent issue, with more than 600 cases charged in 2022 and 554 in 2023. In 2023, there were nearly 1,600 felonies charged against juveniles, the most in over a decade.

Issue #4:

OUTSTANDING MISDEMEANOR WARRANTS:

As of 8/21/24, the Franklin County Municipal Court reported 57,955 outstanding warrants for individuals charged with criminal, traffic, and environmental cases.

Issue #5:

YOUTH ONLINE EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE:

The rapid growth of online platforms, digital communication tools and social media has significantly increased the exposure of children to online exploitation and abuse. Local law enforcement is receiving a rising number of cyber-tips, reports, and referrals involving potential exploitation, and few law enforcement jurisdictions in Franklin County have the necessary specialized training, technology, and dedicated personnel required to investigate these cases effectively.

In addition to the priority areas noted above, Franklin County continues to face interconnected challenges across public safety, housing stability, and economic opportunity that disproportionately affect justice involved residents in historically underserved neighborhoods. At the same time, Franklin County is experiencing a severe housing shortage due to the region's rapid population growth outpacing housing production, contributing to rising rents, increased housing instability, and limited availability of affordable units. Housing insecurity is closely linked to justice involvement and victimization risk, as unstable living conditions can exacerbate stress, limit access to services, and reduce the protective factors that help individuals—especially youth and young adults—avoid harmful environments. Strengthening safety outcomes therefore requires parallel investments in housing stability and supportive services.

Compounding these challenges is the County's ongoing struggle with underemployment. While Columbus has a growing economy, many residents—particularly young adults, returning citizens, and individuals living in high-violence neighborhoods—face barriers to securing stable, living-wage employment. Underemployment reduces economic mobility, increases vulnerability to exploitation, and limits the pathways that help individuals build safe, healthy, and self-sufficient lives. Workforce gaps also weaken community resilience, as families without reliable income face greater difficulty maintaining housing, accessing healthcare, and supporting youth development.

Together, these indicators demonstrate a clear need for coordinated, evidence-based programs that address violence prevention, housing stability, and economic opportunity as interconnected drivers of community well-being. The proposed initiative aligns with multiple local strategic planning documents—including public safety strategies, community health improvement plans, and housing and workforce development frameworks—by advancing a comprehensive approach that strengthens safety, expands access to essential supports, and improves long-term outcomes for Franklin County, OH residents.

Project Design and Implementation

To address the identified issues above, FY 2025 JAG funding will support the following criminal justice-related initiatives:

A. Overdose Epidemic

- A significant number of individuals booked into the Franklin County Jail are screened for an opioid use disorder (OUD). Individuals identified as at risk for OUD may visit the Rapid Resource Center upon release for treatment linkage, assignment to a Peer Support Specialist, assistance with benefits applications, vouchers to procure a birth certificate and/or state ID and to secure personal hygiene and warm weather clothing. Funding through JAG will specifically support Peer Support staff contracted by Franklin County to work with individuals identified as at risk for overdose. Harm reduction supplies including Narcan and fentanyl test strips and basic wound care will be made available to those screened as at risk and Franklin County will sponsor outreach and engagement in recognition of International Overdose Awareness Day.

B. Stepping Up and Reentry Related Initiatives

- Contracts with Peer Support Specialist(s) to assist justice-involved individuals in transition planning and early recovery management. Peers will be positioned in the Franklin County Rapid Resource Center and Safer Stations to ensure immediate linkage to individuals as they are released from the Jail.

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- Supportive services funding to include transportation services from the Franklin County Jail, the purchase of bus passes for dissemination to justice involved individuals in need of transportation assistance to and from treatment appointments, and funds to support securing of necessary identification documents like birth certificates and state identification cards.
- On any given day, upwards of 20 or more homeless individuals are released from the Franklin County Jail with no clothing, personal hygiene items or protection from inclement weather. Kits will be created and distributed to inmates indicating homelessness. Kits will include Narcan (purchased with other funding), basic toiletry items, under garments, and harm reduction information. Tents, sleeping bags, and air mattresses will be available on a limited basis.
- JAG funding will support the printing and distribution of resource materials sent to inmates incarcerated in the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction and slated to return to Franklin County within the following three months.
- Support of the annual Peer Recovery Recruitment event and Restored Citizen's Summit in Franklin County hosted by Mental Health America and the Ohio Restored Citizens Collaborative respectively.
- Support of the newly launched Tap In Center initiative, which offers a safe and non-threatening environment for individuals with a non-violent misdemeanor warrant to address their outstanding legal matters and receive other supportive services like access to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Franklin County Child Support Enforcement and Jobs and Family Services.

C. Law Enforcement Technology

- Purchase of specialized supplies and equipment for law enforcement including:
 - a) Virtual Reality de-escalation training equipment (city of Columbus)
 - b) Mobile Livescan (city of Whitehall)
 - c) WRAP restraint device (city of Whitehall)
 - d) Forensic high speed computer (Franklin County Sheriff's Office)
 - e) Forensic computer supplies (Franklin County Sheriff's Office)

D. Community Corrections

- The Municipal Court Pre-trial and Probation Department will contract with various providers to support a range of reentry functions including pre-trial assessments and mental health and substance use diagnostic assessments.

E. Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC)

- FY 2025 JAG funding will continue to support overtime for the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force which joins ten law enforcement jurisdictions in identification and investigation of internet crimes targeting youth. Funding will also support travel to specialized ICAC training events and the purchase of a forensic high speed computer and forensic supplies (as listed in section C under LE Technology).

F. Corrections Workforce Development

- Funding will support the implementation of two vocational training opportunities within the Franklin County Correctional Center. Automotive Technician training will be offered through the Vehicles for Change virtual reality program for up to 50 incarcerated individuals and up to 80 individuals seeking to become a certified Peer Recovery support professional will have access to 16 hours of Peer Recovery Support training. Lastly, the Franklin County Sheriff's Office will invest JAG funding to purchase subscriptions to Honest Jobs, which is an on-line platform that connects job seekers with second chance employers.

G. Training and Education

Recognizing the value of on-going training and information sharing/networking, funding will be allocated to support travel, registration fees, training and related costs.

Anticipated Conference and Training Events include the following:

- National Criminal Justice Association annual forum (NCJA and BJA sponsored)
- National Conference on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC)
- NatCon National Council for Behavioral Health
- National Children of Incarcerated Parents Conference (BJA)
- International Institute for Restorative Practices World Conference (held in US)
- National Conference on Juvenile Justice (OJJDP)
- Ohio Deflection Summit
- American Correctional Association Annual Conference

H. Management and Administration

The Office of Justice Policy & Programs, (the Regional Planning Unit) will utilize administrative funds totaling 9.5% of the direct allocations to Franklin County and the cities of Whitehall and Columbus. M&A funding will support the following:

- Grants administration of the JAG program, including relevant planning, fiscal and programmatic oversight, assessment, performance data collection, and reporting.
- Timely data collection in compliance with a performance-based system aligned with the BJA performance measures. Individual projects will report quarterly to the Office of Justice Policy & Programs (Administrative Agent)
- Analysis and reporting of individual and aggregate level data for reporting to internal and external stakeholders and the Bureau of Justice Assistance.
- Sub-recipient monitoring includes on-site and desktop financial and programmatic monitoring.

Proposed Outcomes:

Proposed activities within Franklin County's FY 2025 JAG application aligns with the required goal and objective established by the Bureau of Justice Assistance including:

Goal: Improve the administration of the criminal justice system

Objective 1: Assist units of local governments with their criminal justice needs.

In addition to collecting quarterly data in support of the performance metrics required by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the following outcomes will be monitored for program impact:

- 1) Increased access to harm reduction education, peer support, and supportive services like state ID and birth certificate vouchers, transportation, hygiene supplies, etc.. It is anticipated a minimum of 800 justice-involved individuals will receive support in their transition from a carceral setting to the community;
- 2) Increased access to vocational training opportunities for individuals incarcerated in the Franklin County Correctional Facility;
- 3) Increased access to relevant law enforcement training;
- 4) Increased number of outstanding warrants resolved through continued implementation of the Franklin County TAP In Center;

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- 5) Increased identification, investigation and prosecution of individuals committing internet crimes against children;
- 6) Increased access to reentry supportive services by justice involved individuals leaving a carceral setting and/or seeking support through the Office of Justice Policy and Programs;
- 7) Increased law enforcement investigative capacity supporting local drug interdiction and deflection efforts through the use, analysis and deployment of strategic and operational drug intelligence products;
- 8) Increased number of justice practitioners able to attend specialized training, education, and conference events;
- 9) Decrease in use of force incidents as a result of new restraining device – the WRAP;
- 10) Decrease in the number of individuals taken into custody requiring transport and fingerprinting at the Whitehall headquarters.
- 11) Increased access to crisis and short term transitional housing for justice involved individuals seeking treatment and/or other supportive services through the Franklin County Office of Justice Policy and Programs.

Plan for Data Collection

FY 2025 sub-award recipients, including the cities of Columbus and Whitehall will be required to submit quarterly programmatic and fiscal reports to the Franklin County Office of Justice Policy and Programs. Both types of reporting will be submitted electronically to the identified Grants Specialist and Finance Administrator. The Franklin County Office of Justice Policy and Programs (OJPP) will be responsible for reviewing quarterly reporting and aggregating JAG-supported efforts and entry into the Bureau of Justice Assistance Performance Measurement Tool (PMT) portal quarterly and Department of Justices' JustGrants system semi-annually. OJPP will monitor sub-award recipient progress and conduct field visits on a regular basis. Quarterly desktop monitoring will be conducted to reconcile funding to the sub-recipient approved budget and application. OJPP staff are available to provide technical assistance as requested and/or necessary and will host an annual virtual workshop to review financial and programmatic reporting requirements and timelines. To address delinquent submission of reporting by sub-recipients, OJPP will utilize a progressive response that includes notifications by telephone, email, and form letter

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regarding delinquent reporting. If late reporting continues, a meeting will be scheduled with the authorized representative of the agency to review reporting requirements. In the event reporting continues to be delinquent, the sub-award may be terminated for cause.