

BJA FY 2026 Second Chance Act Improving Reentry Education and Employment Outcomes

Grants.gov Funding Opportunity Number: O-BJA-2026-172698

Application Deadlines in Eastern Time (ET):

1. Complete SF-424 and submit in Grants.gov: **September 24, 2026, by 11:59 PM ET**
 2. Submit full application in JustGrants: **October 1, 2026, by 8:59 PM ET**
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1. BASIC INFORMATION

Purpose of the Funding

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) is committed to advancing work that furthers the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) mission to keep our country safe and secure and uphold the rule of law and protect the rights of American citizens. OJP provides federal leadership, funding, and other critical resources to directly support law enforcement, combat violent crime, protect American children, provide services to American crime victims, and address public safety challenges, including human trafficking and the opioid crisis.

This is a notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) for **BJA FY 2026 Second Chance Act (SCA) Improving Reentry Education and Employment Outcomes**. This opportunity supports state, local, and tribal governments and community-based organizations to provide education and employment programs for adults and youth leaving prison and jail. The goal of the program is to improve academic and vocational/trade programs available to adults and youth in prisons and jails and expand workforce development and career pathways that result in improved job readiness, employment attainment, and retention, thereby improving employment prospects and reducing recidivism. Applicants may consider proposing projects that develop marketable skills, leverage technology, and build capacity to align with their local job market and engage in the digital economy.

This NOFO includes two categories:

- **Category 1: Improving Reentry Education Outcomes**

Category 1 will provide support for prison educational programming and vocational/trade education and training that serve adults or youth currently incarcerated with 2 years or less before release into the community.

- **Category 2: Improving Reentry Employment Outcomes**

Category 2 will provide support for employment programs, such as a career pathway system or workforce development network, informed by labor market needs and local demand for employees that serve adults currently incarcerated with 2 years or less before release into the community.

Note: Applicants must commit to ensuring public safety by restricting internet access within incarcerated settings as deemed appropriate by the respective correctional agency.

See the [Eligible Applicants](#) section for eligibility details.

The Second Chance Act of 2007 and the First Step Act of 2018 authorize federal grants to facilitate reentry services and programs for people leaving incarceration. In FY 2026, BJA is releasing six NOFOs to support adults reentering the community and enhance

public safety in different ways. Applicants are welcome to seek funding through more than one [SCA NOFO](#).

Funding Details

Announcement Type	Initial
Assistance Listing Number	16.812
Statutory Authority	Pub. L. No. 90-351, Title I, Sec. 3041 (codified at 34 U.S.C. 10741); Pub. L. No. 110-115, Sec. 115 (codified at 34 U.S.C. 60511); Department of Justice Appropriations Act, 2026 (Pub. L. No. 119-74, 140 Stat. 5, 32, para. 13)
Grants.gov Opportunity Number	O-BJA-2026-172698
Competition ID Number	Category 1, C-BJA-2026-00015-PROD: Improving Reentry Education Outcomes Category 2, C-BJA-2026-00016-PROD: Improving Reentry Employment Outcomes
Expected Total Amount of Funding	Approximately \$20,000,000
Anticipated Number of Awards	Category 1: 10 Category 2: 10
Award Type(s)	Grant
Anticipated Award Amount	Category 1: Up to \$1,000,000 Category 2: Up to \$1,000,000
Expected Award Period(s)	36 months starting on October 1, 2026

Key Dates and Times

NOFO Release Date	August 17, 2026
SAM.gov Registration/Renewal	Begin the process by August 25, 2026, and no later than September 10, 2026
Step 1: Grants.gov Deadline	11:59 p.m. ET on September 24, 2026
Step 2: JustGrants Deadline	8:59 p.m. ET on October 1, 2026

See [Questions?](#) at the end of this NOFO for agency contact information.

2. ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Applicants

The types of entities that are eligible to apply are:

Government Entities

- State governments
- County governments
- City or township governments
- Special district governments
- Native American Tribal governments (federally recognized)
- Native American Tribal governments (other than federally recognized)

Educational Organizations

- Independent school districts
- Public and state-controlled institutions of higher education
- Private institutions of higher education

Nonprofit Organizations

- Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), other than institutions of higher education
- Nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education

For-Profit Organizations

- Organizations other than small businesses
- Small businesses

Other

- Units of local government
- Faith-based Organizations

State Government Entities: For the purposes of this NOFO, “state” means any state of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Small Businesses: Small business grants may be awarded to companies meeting the size standards established by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) for most industries in the economy.

“Other” Entities Definition:

- **Other Units of Local Government:** For the purposes of this notice of funding opportunity, other units of local government include towns, boroughs, parishes, villages, or other general purpose political subdivisions of a state.
- **Faith-based Organizations:** Religious organizations, faith-based nonprofits, and organizations with religious charters, names, or missions.

Cost Sharing (Match) Requirement: This NOFO does **not** require cost sharing (match).

Limit on Number of Applications: You may submit more than one application for this NOFO if each application proposes a different project. Each application should apply to only one category of the NOFO.

You may apply to more than one [BJA FY 2026 Second Chance Act program](#) and may reuse portions of your narrative across multiple applications. All other required materials must be submitted separately in response to each NOFO.

Additional Eligibility Factors

Certifications: You must submit the following certifications. See [Additional Application Components](#) for how to submit.

- **[Appendix A: Mandatory Chief Executive Assurance to Collect and Report Recidivism Indicator Data](#)**—Applicants must certify that it will collect unique identifiers and recidivism indicator performance data for each program participant to meet program reporting requirements. This certification is a basic minimum requirement of this funding opportunity, such that applications from applicants required to submit it and fail to do so, will be denied.

Required Partnership: Nonprofit organizations and non-correctional government applicants must include, as an attachment, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that clearly demonstrates an established, collaborative relationship with the correctional agency that (1) oversees the specific facility or facilities from which the applicant proposes to recruit the target reentering population; and/or (2) oversees relevant community corrections (probation and/or parole) for the target population. See the [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) section in this NOFO.

3. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Statutory Authority

Pub. L. No. 90-351, Title I, Sec. 3041 (codified at 34 U.S.C. 10741); Pub. L. No. 110-115, Sec. 115 (codified at 34 U.S.C. 60511); Department of Justice Appropriations Act, 2026 (Pub. L. No. 119-74, 140 Stat. 5, 32, para. 13)

Agency Funding Priorities

To help meet its mission, OJP may give priority consideration to applications proposing (as applicable within the scope of this NOFO) projects designed to advance the goals listed below:

- Directly supporting law enforcement operations (including immigration law enforcement operations);
- Combatting violent crime;
- Supporting services to American citizens;
- Protecting American children; and

(e) Supporting American victims of trafficking and sexual assault.

Priority consideration will also be given under this NOFO for state/local law enforcement efforts that are coordinated with federal law enforcement efforts through: (i) established and full participation in, or (ii) commitment to enter into and fully participate in a 287(g) partnership and/or a Homeland Security Task Force (HSTF). To request priority consideration, applicants must provide a letter of support from DOJ through the U.S. Attorney's Office's Lead HSTF Attorney (for the applicable HSTF), certifying the applicant is currently or intends to participate in HSTF activities or major DOJ operations; with respect to a 287(g) partnership, the applicant must provide documentary evidence that it is already an established 287(g) partner, or else, evidence of a bona fide commitment to engage in such a partnership.

In addition to the Agency priorities, listed above additional priority considerations are:

1. Category 1 applicants that propose to focus on vocational/trade education and training, and
2. Category 2 applicants that:
 - a) Provide an assessment of local demand for employees in the geographic areas to which incarcerated adults are likely to return, as well as provide job training that look at the local labor/job markets in communities where adults leaving incarceration are returning;
 - b) Conduct individualized reentry career planning upon the start of incarceration or post-release employment planning for everyone served under the grant;
 - c) Demonstrate connections to employers within the local community; and
 - d) Track and monitor employment outcomes.

Note: Addressing these priorities is one of many factors that OJP considers in making funding decisions. Receiving priority consideration does not guarantee funding.

Unallowable Activities: The following are certain unallowable costs and certain activities that are out of the program scope and will not be funded.

1. Out of program scope is any program or activity, at any tier that, directly or indirectly, violates (or promotes or facilitates the violation of) federal immigration law (including 8 U.S.C. § 1373) or impedes or hinders the enforcement of federal immigration law—including by failing to comply with 8 U.S.C. § 1373, give access to DHS agents, or honor DHS requests and provide requested notice to DHS agents.
2. Out of program scope is any program or activity, at any tier that violates any applicable Federal civil rights or nondiscrimination law. This includes violations that (1) indirectly violate the law, including by promoting or facilitating violations; or (2) unlawfully favor individuals in any race or protected group, including on a

majority or minority, or privileged or unprivileged, basis, within a given area, population, or sector.

3. As specified in the [DOJ Grants Financial Guide](#), in Chapter 3.13 “Unallowable Costs” (“Legal Services for Aliens”), any obligations of funds, at any tier, under this award to provide (or to support the provision of) legal services to any removable alien or any alien otherwise unlawfully present in the United States shall be unallowable costs for purposes any award made under this notice, but the foregoing shall not be understood to apply: (1) to legal services to obtain protection orders for victims of crime; or (2) to immigration-related legal services that may be expressly authorized or required by any law, or any judicial ruling, governing or applicable to the award.

Goals and Objectives of This Funding Opportunity

Goal: Improve education attainment and employment outcomes for adults or youth in reentry to reduce recidivism.

- **Objective 1:** Implement strategies to increase educational or employment success for adults or youth currently incarcerated with 2 years or less before release into the community.
- **Objective 2:** Create a career pathway system or a workforce development network that will implement opportunities for currently incarcerated adults with 2 years or less before release into the community.

For a description of how awards under this NOFO will contribute to achieving these goals and objectives, see the [Performance Reports](#) section below.

Expected Outcomes

OJP expects recipients to submit deliverables and performance reports, as described below. Read the [Application Resource Guide](#) for more information. OJP will measure success by reviewing a recipient’s submission of performance reports and data and the extent to which project implementation reflects progress toward the goals and objectives of this NOFO.

Deliverables

Recipients will be expected to submit the following:

- Final Performance Report (see below) to include recidivism outcomes as noted in [Appendix A](#).

Performance Reports

OJP requires recipients to submit regular performance reports that communicate progress toward achieving the [Program Goals and Objectives](#). Read information on [performance reporting](#).

Award recipients will receive further guidance on post award reporting requirements.

4. APPLICATION CONTENTS AND FORMAT

Application Contents List

OJP will only consider applications that contain all required parts, which are marked ***Required*** below. Refer to the [DOJ Grant Application Submission Checklist](#) for application instructions.

Application Item	Submission Type
Step 1: Grants.gov	
Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424 *Required*	Online Form
Step 2: JustGrants	
Standard Applicant Information *Required*	Online Form
Proposal Abstract	Text Box
Data Requested With Application - Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire (including Applicant Disclosure of High-Risk Status) - Agency Funding Priorities Inventory	Online Form
Proposal Narrative *Required*	Attachment
Budget *Required*	Online Form
Other Budget/Financial Attachments - Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable) - Consultant Rate (if applicable) - Limitation on Use of Award Funds for Employee Compensation for Awards Over \$250,000; Waiver (if applicable) - Disclosure of Process Related to Executive Compensation (if applicable)	Attachment
Memorandum of Understanding *Required for nonprofit organizations and non-correctional government applicants*	Attachment
Additional Application Components Tribal Authorizing Resolution (if applicable)	Attachment

• Mandatory Chief Executive Assurance to Comply with Statutory and Program Requirements (Appendix A) *Required*	
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In addition to the items marked ***Required*** in the table above, the following are considered basic minimum requirement elements that are considered in the responsiveness review:

- The application is submitted by an eligible applicant.
- The application is responsive to the scope of the NOFO.
- Questionnaire (including Applicant Disclosure of High-Risk Status)

Standard Applicant Information ***Required***

Review and edit as needed the information imported from the SF-424 submitted in Grants.gov. Add ZIP codes for areas affected by the project.

Proposal Abstract

In JustGrants, enter a proposal abstract (limited to 2,000 characters) summarizing the proposed project. As abstracts for funded projects are public, do not include any personally identifying information (e.g., staff names). The abstract should include the following information:

- The name of the applicant's proposed project.
- The purpose of the proposed project (i.e., what the project will do and why it is necessary).
- Where the project will take place (i.e., the service area, if applicable).
- Who will be served by the project (i.e., who will be helped or have their needs addressed by the project).
- What activities will be carried out to complete the project.
- The subrecipient(s)/partner organizations or entities, if known.
- Deliverables and expected outcomes (i.e., what the project will achieve).
- Name(s) of other SCA NOFOs to which the applicant applied.

View an example of a [proposal abstract](#).

Data Requested With Application

Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire (including Applicant Disclosure of High-Risk Status)

Review information on this [questionnaire](#).

Agency Funding Priorities Inventory

Applicants seeking priority consideration under the [Agency Funding Priorities](#) section should answer the inventory questions in their entirety in the web-based form in JustGrants.

Proposal Narrative ***Required***

Format of the Proposal Narrative

Submit the narrative as an attachment in JustGrants. The document should:

- Be double-spaced, using a standard 12-point size font
- Have no less than 1-inch margins
- Have numbered pages
- Not exceed 15 pages

Tables, charts, and graphs included in the proposal narrative will count toward the page limit and may use a legible font smaller than 12-point. If the Proposal Narrative does not follow this format, OJP may reduce the score/ranking of the application.

Note: Applicants may apply to more than one BJA FY 2026 Second Chance Act program and may reuse portions of their narrative across multiple applications. All other required materials must be submitted separately in response to each NOFO.

Sections of the Proposal Narrative

The Proposal Narrative must include the four sections listed below. If you want priority consideration, the Proposal Narrative must state which [priority\(ies\)](#) your project will advance and describe how it will do so.

1. Description of the Need (5% of application score): What critical issue or problem do you propose to address with this project? Please include:

- A brief explanation of the need, gap, or issue to be addressed by the proposed project.
- Supporting information, data, or evidence to demonstrate the need's existence, size, and impact on the target population and community.
- How the need relates to the purpose of the NOFO.
- Describe the current process, including timing, tools used, and staff responsible for assessing adults or youth for their educational needs or job readiness. Describe the range and types of educational- or employment-related services available to the target population, including state and federally funded initiatives. Discuss any existing or proposed partnerships with educational, vocational/trade, or employment training organizations.

2. Project Goals and Objectives (15% of application score): How will the proposed project address the need identified and address the purpose of the NOFO? Please include:

- Project goals (goals are broad, visionary statements on what you hope to accomplish).
- Project objectives (objectives are specific outcomes you plan to achieve through project activities).

- How your project goals and objectives relate to the goals and objectives of the funding opportunity.

3. Project Design and Implementation (35% of application score): How will you implement project activities that meet the project goals and objectives? Please include:

- What activities will you conduct to achieve the proposed goals and objectives. Include supporting information, such as data, names of validated assessment tools, or use of research-informed strategies as applicable.
- When the activities will take place.
- How will you deliver or complete those activities.
- A description of the target population, including eligibility requirements for program participation and the number proposed to be engaged, including an explanation of how this number was determined and can be served in the allotted grant timeframe.
- Identify and explain the baseline recidivism rate for the target population.
- Who in your organization will staff the activities, including key staff.
- What deliverables, reports, and other items will be produced as part of the project.
- If you plan to use subrecipients to help conduct the project, please name them (if they are known) or describe how you will identify them. Please describe their role in conducting project activities.
- Applicants must commit to ensuring public safety by restricting internet access within incarcerated settings as deemed appropriate by the respective correctional agency.
- If you are seeking statutory priority consideration (Category 2 only), how will you meet the requirements listed in the Agency Funding Priorities section of this NOFO. This should include a description of methods and measures that will be used to track and monitor employment outcomes.

4. Capabilities and Competencies (30% of application score): What administrative and technical capacity and expertise do you bring to successfully complete this project? Please include:

- A short description of your capacity to deliver the proposed project and meet the post-award requirements, if funded, including collecting and reporting the required performance measure data.
- A description of projects or activities your organization has conducted, or is currently conducting, that demonstrates your ability to undertake the proposed project activities.
- A summary of relevant experience of team members (corrections agency, state/local departments of labor and workforce agency, business organization, community corrections agency, community-based organization, postsecondary institution, employers, etc.) with key responsibilities for implementing the project.

- For nonprofit applicants, a discussion of your history collaborating with correctional agency partners. The extent to which the applicant can demonstrate a collaborative partnership with institutional and/or community corrections agencies that includes access to participants with facilities prior to release and data sharing will be key factors in assessing the application's strengths. The nature of this collaboration should be reflected in the uploaded Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Project Evaluations: An applicant that proposes to use award funds to conduct project evaluations must follow the guidance on [project evaluations](#).

Budget and Associated Documentation

Budget (15% of application score) ***Required***

- Use the Budget Detail Worksheet (Web-Based Form) or Separate Attachment (attach file in JustGrants) to submit the budget. Read information on [budget preparation](#) and [JustGrants Application Submission Training](#).
- List each cost needed to implement the project under the appropriate cost category.
- Clearly name and describe each cost.
- Show the computation of each cost (e.g., cost per unit, number of units, and total cost).
- Enter narrative, as needed, to explain the cost calculations and connection to your project goals, objectives, and activities.
- Include only costs that are reasonable, allocable, and necessary to implement the project. They must be allowable under the funding statute and agency requirements.¹

In addition to unallowable costs identified in the DOJ Grants Financial Guide, award funds may not be used for the following:

- Prizes, rewards, entertainment, trinkets, or any other monetary incentives
- Client stipends
- Gift cards
- Vehicle purchases
- Food and beverages

Budget/Financial Attachments

- **Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable):** If the budget includes indirect costs calculated using a current, federally approved indirect cost rate, upload your indirect cost rate agreement. Read information about [indirect costs](#).
- **Consultant Rate (if applicable):** Read information on [limits to consultant rates](#) and whether you need to request approval to exceed those limits.

¹ See [2 C.F.R. Part 200, Subpart E](#) and the [DOJ Grants Financial Guide](#). Read information on [unallowable costs](#) that apply to all funding opportunities.

- **Limitation on Use of Award Funds for Employee Compensation for Awards Over \$250,000; Waiver (if applicable):** Read information on this [limitation](#) and to determine whether you need to submit a waiver.
- **Disclosure of Process Related to Executive Compensation (if applicable):** An applicant that is a nonprofit organization may be required to make certain disclosures relating to the processes it uses to determine the compensation of its officers, directors, trustees, and key employees. Read information about this [disclosure and documentation](#) to upload.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Supporting Documents

Required for Nonprofit Organizations and Non-correctional Government Applicants

Attach a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or letter of intent between the applicant and each of the project partner(s). Read information on what to include in an [MOU/letter of intent](#).

MOUs should be submitted as one separate attachment to the application. Unsigned draft MOUs may be submitted with the application, but you should describe in a cover page to the attachment why they are unsigned.

Nonprofit organizations and non-correctional government applicants must include, as an attachment, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that clearly demonstrates an established, collaborative relationship with the correctional agency. See [Additional Eligibility Factors](#): Required Partnerships for details.

Additional Application Components

Attach these in JustGrants:

- **Tribal Authorizing Resolution (if applicable):** Read information on whether you may need to submit a [Tribal Authorizing Resolution](#).
- Mandatory Chief Executive Assurance to Comply with Statutory and Program Requirements ([Appendix A](#)) ***Required***

Disclosures and Assurances

Read the [disclosures and assurances](#) and complete them in JustGrants:

- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- Disclosure of Duplication in Cost Items (if applicable)
- DOJ Certified Standard Assurances
- DOJ Certifications
- Applicant Disclosure and Justification – DOJ High-Risk Grantees (if applicable)

5. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES

The [DOJ Grant Application Submission Checklist](#) provides instructions for how to submit your application by the [deadlines](#). [Executive Order \(E.O.\) 12372](#) (Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs) does not apply to this funding opportunity: read the [Application Resource Guide](#) for details. Read OJP's policy for applicants to [request late submission](#) due to technical difficulties, severe weather, or natural or manmade disasters.

6. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

The [Application Resource Guide](#) explains the responsiveness review, review criteria, and review and selection process, including risk review, and deciding official. Refer to the [Application Contents List](#) for all required application components and other basic minimum requirement elements that are considered in the responsiveness review. The [Proposal Narrative](#) and [Budget](#) sections of this NOFO indicates the weight of peer review criteria.

7. AWARD NOTICES

Read about the [award notification](#) process.

8. POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS & ADMINISTRATION

Read the [Application Resource Guide](#) for more information about standard award terms and conditions, administrative and national policy requirements, and post-award reporting requirements.

9. QUESTIONS?

NOFO Contact	Name: OJP Response Center Phone: 800-851-3420 or 202-353-5556 (TTY for hearing-impaired callers only) Email: OJP.ResponseCenter@usdoj.gov Hours: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. ET, Monday–Friday
SAM.gov Help Desk	Website: sam.gov/help Hours: 8 a.m.–8 p.m. ET, Monday–Friday (closed federal holidays)
Grants.gov Help Desk	Phone: 800-518-4726 Email: support@grants.gov Website: grants.gov/support Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (closed federal holidays)

JustGrants Help Desk	Phone: 833-872-5175 Email: JustGrants.Support@usdoj.gov Hours: 7:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m. ET, Monday–Friday and 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. ET on Saturday, Sunday, and federal holidays.
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APPENDIX A

Mandatory Chief Executive Assurance to Collect and Report Recidivism Indicator Data

I hereby assure that, if awarded grant funds under the FY 2026 Second Chance Act Improving Reentry Education and Employment Outcomes Program, my organization will collect unique identifiers and recidivism indicator performance data for each program participant and will aggregate all such data and submit them via Just Grants as required upon grant closeout. I understand that the inability or refusal to submit such data after an award is made may impact my organization's ability to receive future Bureau of Justice Assistance competitive grant funding.

Signature

Title

Date