



JEAN PETERS BAKER
Jackson County Prosecuting Attorney

May 28, 2024

RE: Support for No-cost extension Grant Adjustment Modification (GAM #592620) for Award 2020- YX-BX-0014

The Jackson County Prosecuting Attorney's Office is seeking a six month no-cost extension, from 10/1/24 to 3/31/25, for the Innovative Prosecution Solutions for Combatting Violent Crime award, number 2020- YX-BX-0014. The original project period was 10/1/20 to 9/30/22. The first project period extension was from 10/1/22 to 9/30/23. The GAM number for that extension is 559084. The current period of performance for this award is 10/1/22 to 9/30/24 under GAM number 573143. The most recent unobligated funds balance as of 4/15/2024 is \$86,170.56.

This grant adjustment modification constitutes our third request for a no-cost extension pursuant to OJP Order 4200.1 ¶ 3.6.2.

Current Program Status

This grant was awarded to build a Crime Strategies Unit (CSU) for Jackson County to collect, organize and disseminate critical crime data to police, prosecutors, City Hall, and the community. The grant included funds for technology as well as a crime analyst. It also included strategy and funding to engage with a high-crime neighborhood and implement a community diversion program there. At this time, a CSU had been established in Jackson County. The CSU has analyzed current and historical crime data and worked tirelessly to share this with the community, even building dashboards available to anyone with an internet connection. These dashboards provide weekly updated crime data from our office and include the number and type of cases submitted, charged and disposed of by our office. The dashboards also provide the most accurate data on who and for how long people have been detained pre-trial. This level of detail and transparency is unprecedented in our jurisdiction. CSU also added a Community Advisory

Board of urban residents and neighborhood leaders to advise about its efforts to bring more transparency to the prosecutor's office.

The creation of a dashboard to track violence – fatal and non-fatal shootings in Kansas City – was initially intended to inform the community more deeply about the type and location of this violence, as well as how many of these cases were being submitted for prosecution, were dismissed or pleaded or won or lost at trial. But the dashboard and the data behind it offered another opportunity. CSU expanded its efforts, enlisting community partners to build an automated victim referral system. CSU developed the system to refer the city's gunshot victims to an urban-based hub for social services, where a social worker contacts victims to see if they are interested in a variety of services, everything from help with rent because their wounded family member can't work, to fixing residential property damaged by gunfire to securing grief counseling. CSU believes this outreach to gunshot victims is extremely important in curbing violence in Kansas City, as it remains in the nation's Top 10 cities for homicide rate. For CSU, this effort has been greatly helped by the addition of a second crime analyst in October 2022, who oversees those referrals and maintains the CSU dashboards. It's updated each week with the previous week's shootings. The analyst manually converts data of the week's victims from the Kansas City Police Department (KCPD) reports, and we discuss with KCPD which ones should be referred/are safe for social workers to contact for services.

An additional note about this new referral system. It is part of the Partners for Peace program, a new effort to reduce violence in Kansas City that originated from the Justice Department's Public Safety Partnership, which helped Kansas City create a strategic plan to reduce violence in Kansas City after the Kansas City No Violence Alliance was ended by KCPD. A key pillar in the new program, now called Partners for Peace, was intervention. The prosecutor's office was named to lead the intervention effort. The strategy agreed upon for the intervention effort included a goal of reaching out to every gunshot victim in our city. CSU has given us a way to do that.

CSU also acquired more sophisticated technology that has provided significant help in major cases, resulting in at least one historic verdict and multiple important plea agreements. With the help of CSU, our Office has made significant in-roads with the Blue Hills area community. CSU, through the county, is working on renewing a contract with a local restorative justice organization, Center for Conflict Resolution, for an expanded community diversion program. CSU will restart efforts to refer to them criminal cases that could be heard and handled by a Neighborhood Accountability Board (NAB). This diversion engages the community as local residents sit on the board and hear the cases and meet the defendant.

Project Delays

Last year, in April, we requested a one-year extension. We made this request to finally bring a second crime analyst on board. Note that in last year's extension we stated we had brought on a second analyst, but before that second analyst could begin, our first analyst left for the private sector. We moved the new analyst into the first analyst's position, supported by non-grant dollars. We didn't hear about approval of our extension request until late summer. We began the process of advertising and hiring a new analyst soon after. We hired and on-boarded the new

analyst in late-October 2022. Since then, his funding has come solely from the grant. The hiring process, as well as the process of referring cases to the Neighborhood Accountability Board under our restorative justice effort, was slowed by the departure of Kate Brubacher, the assistant prosecuting attorney who worked on the grant. She left the prosecutor's office in August 2022 to prepare for her nomination as U.S. Attorney for the District of Kansas. She was confirmed in 2023. We added a new prosecutor to the CSU in late-summer 2023.

Earlier, our work was thwarted by the global pandemic and its after-effects. Our courthouse closed in mid-2020 and our office was still working on a reduced trial schedule in 2023, although it reopened to normal operations later in 2023. For a time, most of our office was working remotely.

It was extremely difficult to catch up in our spending of grant dollars, especially in the restorative justice area of this grant, following those delays. The county's bureaucracy is set up for the traditional handling of criminal cases. And it seems almost everything about the way it operates acts to protect that old system. Initially, it's months to win sole source designation for the restorative justice vendor, then months more for the vendor to train NAB members and handle the cases. The first set of cases was small. This was, in part, an outgrowth of the next bureaucratic issue: the county's contract process is extremely slow and impacts reimbursing vendors in a timely manner. So, the number of cases we sent to the NAB was small initially. That helped to protect the contracted agency from having to wait months for a large, requested reimbursement. Then, after Brubacher left, a new prosecutor who might be interested in this type of community engagement regarding a new method of disposing of cases required some time to find. Now, that prosecutor, Claire Wyatt, is in place.

Yes, the county's reimbursement system will still be slow. But we believe we can come up with some new strategies to find and send a larger set of cases to the NAB process on the front end. We hope this allows more cases into the process more quickly and we plan to communicate clearly about the delays in reimbursement so the agency can properly anticipate its budget impacts.

We hope this will allow us to create enough outcomes regarding these cases to impress on the county and future funders the great need to find new ways to handle criminal cases. It should be recognized that we will not be able to change that system, especially if we cannot direct grant dollars at this exciting new way of handling cases in a different, more restorative manner. We would hope to send at least 20 cases to this new system, which would be a significant increase. It may be a sample size large enough to possibly justify future exploration of building this new method of handling cases into our current system.

A Six-Month Project Plan if Extension Is Granted

If granted, this six-month extension would allow us to use \$30,000 to expand restorative justice efforts in the city's urban core, investing in up to 20 to 25 criminal cases by sending them before Neighborhood Accountability Boards to complete diversions and case resolution. The prosecutor assigned to CSU is currently working on ways to find more criminal cases from the office's General Crime Unit for this effort. This will strengthen community ties and enable more data-

informed decisions in our charging and sentencing decisions. We will also use approximately \$50,207 to expand the crime analyst position from October 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025. This analyst will continue to maintain the CSU dashboards and refer the city's gunshot victims to an urban-based hub for social services under the Partners for Peace program.

If Extension is Not Granted

If the extension is not granted, CSU will continue, but with only one instead of two analysts and NAB's efforts would be curtailed. We also have no training or travel budget for the remaining analyst. We would seek online training options for our analyst. The community diversion program will only be able to process a few cases before the end of September, if the grant is not extended.

Sincerely,

Jean Peters Baker

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Jackson County, Prosecutor

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