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Review of the Office for Victims of Crime State Victim Assistance Academy Grant Program

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Final Report

About This Report

The Office of Justice Programs, Office of Audit, Assessment, and Management (OAAM), Program Assessment Division prepared this report. For questions regarding the content or distribution of this report, please contact Maureen Henneberg, director of OAAM, at (202) 616-3282.

Acronyms

CEU	Continuing Education Unit
NIJ	National Institute of Justice
NVAA	National Victim Assistance Academy
OAAM	Office of Audit, Assessment, and Management
OVC	Office for Victims of Crime
OVC TTAC	OVC Training and Technical Assistance Center
SVAA	State Victim Assistance Academy
VOCA	Victims of Crime Act



Review of the Office for Victims of Crime State Victim Assistance Academy Grant Program

Objective of the Study

The Office of Audit, Assessment, and Management (OAAM) has completed an assessment of the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) State Victim Assistance Academy (SVAA) grant program. The objectives of this assessment were to:

- 1) Collect and examine information about current and former SVAA grantees to provide OVC with an analysis of the descriptive characteristics of the SVAA program;
- 2) Identify the factors that contributed to the sustainability of past SVAAAs and determine if the sustained SVAAAs have certain commonalities;
- 3) Identify challenges and innovative practices among SVAAAs; and
- 4) Recommend steps that OVC might take to improve the SVAA grant program in the future and support former grantees who continue to operate SVAAAs.

Overall Synopsis

The SVAA program has been largely successful in using seed money to establish SVAAAs across the country. The majority of these academies are still operating, with many having maintained the original 5 ½ day, 40-hour course format set forth in the National Victim Assistance Academy (NVAA) model. Other SVAAAs have adapted their venue, course length, and other features to meet budget challenges and/or better meet their state's training needs for victim service providers.

While OAAM examined several descriptive characteristics and known sustainability factors for SVAAAs, OAAM was not able to identify common characteristics among SVAAAs that operated beyond the funding provided by OVC, except to note that sustained SVAAAs were more likely to have a dedicated representative and/or an



advisory board. These SVAAAs also incorporated many of the factors recommended in literature on sustainability, including maintaining a broad funding base.

In addition, OAAM identified several steps that OVC should consider to improve the current grant program, as well as some issues that OVC should consider addressing regarding the future of the grant program and the quality of the training provided by SVAAAs already in place.

Methodology Overview

To conduct this assessment, OAAM first researched and reviewed published literature on program sustainability in order to identify relevant factors for SVAA sustainability. OAAM also examined the 2003 case study, commissioned by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and OVC, on the five pilot SVAA grantees that were funded in 1999.

Based on this research, OAAM developed interview questions for SVAA grantees on key topic areas mentioned in literature about the characteristics of sustained organizations. Those areas included funding, dedicated representatives, marketing, networking, and sustainability planning. OAAM then conducted telephone interviews with representatives from 28 SVAAAs.¹ From the interviews, OAAM gathered background information about each of the SVAAAs to determine the status of their operations and to identify common characteristics and strategies they used to sustain themselves.

OAAM used the information obtained from the interviews to classify each of the SVAAAs as either sustained (i.e., operating consistently or marginally consistently since their OVC grant funding ended), or unsustainable (i.e., no longer operating). OAAM then conducted extensive analyses of the characteristics of the SVAAAs, such as organization type and academy format, in order to determine if the sustained SVAAAs had similar characteristics and, conversely, whether the unsustainable SVAAAs had characteristics in common as well.

OAAM also interviewed key personnel in OVC involved in the SVAA program and conducted interviews of staff in OVC's Training and Technical Assistance Center (OVC TTAC). In addition, OAAM reviewed all of the available solicitations for the SVAA program from FY 2003 through FY 2012 and examined grant applications, progress

¹ At the time of OAAM's interviews, 36 SVAAAs had participated in the OVC grant program. Of the 36 SVAAAs, two were no longer in contact with OVC. OAAM contacted the other 34 SVAAAs for interviews, and 28 of them agreed to participate.



reports, and performance measurement data for the SVAA program in the Grants Management System (GMS).² For additional discussion on OAAM's methodology for this assessment, please see Appendix A.

Background

SVAA Goals and Objectives

The SVAA program provides comprehensive, academically based, fundamental education and training for victim assistance providers, victim advocates, criminal justice personnel, and allied professionals who routinely deal with crime victims. OVC's goals for the SVAA program are to have each state operate in partnership with an academic institution to develop a state-specific course of study to meet the entry-level educational needs of victim service providers, adapting a model NVAA curriculum to the state's particular needs. As a secondary goal, OVC wants the SVAA program to encourage a course of study in victim services at the partnering academic institution, which would either be reflected through the integration of victim issues into the university curricula or would become a separate course or degree program in victimology.

How the SVAA Program Works

The SVAA program provides seed money to states, with grantees required to provide a 25 percent match for each year of the 3-year grant program. By providing seed money to states to develop SVAAAs, the intent is for the SVAA to become institutionalized in the state and continue to offer training after OVC funding for the program has ended. The program is designed to give grantees the tools, knowledge, and training to both develop an SVAA and sustain it after funding has ended.

OVC modeled the SVAA program after the format of the OVC-sponsored NVAA. The NVAA provides a blend of education and skill-based training through a residential, 40-hour course delivered to victim service providers and allied professionals over 5 ½ days at university campus sites across the country. The residential format of the NVAA fosters an environment that allows participants to engage in collaboration and networking. OVC encouraged states to use the NVAA format as a model for their SVAAAs, and to tailor the NVAA curriculum to address their state-level training needs in order for the SVAA to provide a comprehensive, academically based, and state-specific

² Complete award files were not available in GMS for all of the SVAA grants, particularly those awarded early in the program.



course of study of victims' rights and services. In addition to the NVAA curriculum and materials that are available for use by SVAA grantees, OVC TTAC provides a wide range of resources and technical expertise to assist grantees in developing their academies and sustaining them after the end of OVC funding.

Each SVAA grantee receives a total of \$195,000 through a 3-year grant program.³ Specifically, each SVAA receives \$35,000 in the first year for planning, \$100,000 in the second year for implementation and evaluation, and \$60,000 in the third year for refinement and replication.

During the first year of the grant, OVC expects each SVAA to use the \$35,000 provided to—

1. form a diverse steering committee of victim service providers to strategically plan the development of the SVAA;
2. begin university and community planning for the implementation of the SVAA through a combination of federal, state, and local funding;
3. conduct a state-wide, training needs assessment to ensure that the SVAA will not duplicate existing training efforts and will meet the training and educational needs of the field in the state; and
4. design a state-specific SVAA curriculum or adapt the NVAA curriculum to the state's needs.

In the second year, OVC provides each grantee with \$100,000 to hold its first academy, evaluate that academy, and then review and update the curriculum or other aspects of the course, as necessary.

In the third year, OVC provides each grantee with \$60,000 to hold its second academy. OVC expects that the decrease in federal funding in Year 3 will be accompanied by an increase in state, local, or other funding for the SVAA. Starting in the fourth year, OVC envisions that the SVAA will continue to operate annually by securing state, local, or other private funding.

³ The Michigan SVAA was co-funded by OVC in 1998 as a demonstration program through a one-time grant.



SVAA Current Status

As of August 2012, a total of 40 states and territories have been awarded SVAA grants, and OVC plans to award grants to three additional states in 2012.⁴ The SVAA program is still ongoing with 8 states and 4 territories still eligible to apply for an SVAA grant. Table 1 below shows the award history for the 40 states and territories that have been awarded SVAA grants.

Table 1: SVAA Award History

Initial Year of Funding	SVAA
1998	Michigan*
1999	Colorado, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Utah
2000	Vermont
2001	No new grants awarded
2002	Arizona, Maine/New Hampshire, Maryland, Missouri, and Oregon
2003	Georgia, Illinois, and New York
2004	California, Minnesota, South Carolina, and Tennessee
2005	Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Puerto Rico, and Washington
2006	Arkansas, District of Columbia, Iowa, and Virginia
2007	New Jersey, North Dakota, Rhode Island, and West Virginia
2008	Alabama, Alaska, and Oklahoma
2009	No new grants awarded
2010	No solicitation issued
2011	Nebraska, Wisconsin, Indiana, and Kentucky

Source: GMS, FY 2011 SVAA program solicitation, and OVC officials

* The Michigan SVAA was co-funded by OVC in 1998 as a demonstration project through a one-time grant.

How OAAM Assessed the SVAA Program

In order to assess the SVAA program, OAAM worked with key OVC staff to determine how they would define success for an SVAA grantee. Based on these discussions, OAAM determined that a successful SVAA would: 1) have continued to operate consistently beyond the OVC grant funding period; and 2) be operating a quality program tailored to meet the needs of that state's victim service providers. Of

⁴ Of the 40 SVAA grantees, 36 were current or former grantees at the time that OAAM conducted interviews in fall 2011.



particular note, OVC staff did not believe that it was sufficient for an SVAA to simply open its doors for business year after year. Rather, they believed it was essential for an SVAA to continue to adapt and update its program, in order to provide quality training that addresses the needs of the state's victim service providers, particularly as those needs change over time.

Based on this information, OAAM summarized OVC's objectives for SVAA grantees as the ability to 1) achieve longevity and 2) deliver quality training. OAAM determined that these measures of success are inherently linked. For example, the quality of an SVAA's program will not matter if the SVAA cannot open its doors to train victim service providers. Similarly, while a consistently operating SVAA will be able to train victim service providers, without a quality training program in place, the SVAA may not be improving the skills of these providers and may even be having a negative impact on the victim services field.

Of these two measures, longevity is the primary focus of OAAM's review, as assessing the quality of individual SVAAAs was outside the scope of the assessment and beyond the resources of OAAM. However, OAAM acknowledges the importance of each SVAA having a quality training program in place, and discusses the issue of quality throughout the report.

Results

Of the 28 SVAAAs OAAM interviewed, 24 were operating, while the remaining 4 were closed. However, 4 of the 24 operating SVAAAs were recent grantees that had not yet operated their SVAAAs without any OVC funding. Of the 20 SVAAAs that were operating independent of OVC funding, 16 had been operating consistently by holding at least one academy every year since their grant funding ended. The other 4 SVAAAs were marginally operating, in that they had not been able to hold an academy every year since their OVC grants ended or as they had intended,⁵ usually because of a lack of funding. Table 2 below classifies the 28 SVAAAs into four categories based on their operating status at the time of our interviews. See Appendix B, Table 1, for information on the operating history of each of the 28 SVAAAs.

⁵ Some SVAAAs only intend to hold their academies every other year, or on some other basis than annually.



Table 2: Classification of SVAA Operating Status

Operating Consistently (16 SVAAAs)	Marginally Operating (4 SVAAAs)	Recent Grantees (4 SVAAAs)	Closed (4 SVAAAs)
Michigan	Texas	New Jersey	Connecticut
Pennsylvania	New York	North Dakota	Georgia
Colorado	Minnesota	Alaska	South Carolina
Vermont	Louisiana	Oklahoma	Florida
Arizona			
Maine/New Hampshire			
Maryland			
Oregon			
Illinois			
Tennessee			
Massachusetts			
Iowa			
Rhode Island			
West Virginia			
Missouri			
Washington			

Source: Interviews and follow-up questionnaires

The results from OAAM’s assessment are divided into three sections in this report. Section I of the report provides a landscape of the SVAA program by presenting information on the descriptive characteristics of the 28 SVAAAs that OAAM interviewed, including the types of organizations funded, their years in operation, and their academy formats, as well as the number of academies each SVAA has held and the number of participants each SVAA has trained. Section II of the report presents further analysis of the 20 SVAAAs, of 28 interviewed, that have continued to operate and, therefore, have achieved longevity.⁶ Section III of the report describes the results from OAAM’s review of OVC’s management of the SVAA grant program, based on interviews with OVC and OVC TTAC staff.

⁶ Of the 28 SVAAAs that OAAM interviewed, 4 were recent grantees who had not yet operated without SVAA grant funding, and 4 were not operating at the time. Because the factors examined in Section II were not applicable to an SVAA in either of these statuses, these 8 SVAAAs were not analyzed for this section.



Section I: The SVAA Landscape

OAAM asked each of the 28 SVAAAs interviewed a series of questions about its program, including questions about its operating status, organizational structure, course format, and annual budget. OAAM analyzed this data in two ways. First, OAAM determined how many times a descriptive characteristic was present among the 28 SVAAAs, for example, how many SVAAAs charged a registration fee. Second, OAAM determined whether there were certain characteristics among the different classifications of SVAAAs (i.e., operating, marginally operating, closed, and recent) that distinguished them from each other, for example, whether SVAAAs with sustained operations had larger budgets.

The information collected from the 28 SVAAAs is summarized below and represents the status of the SVAAAs at the time of OAAM's interviews in fall 2011. In some cases, data was not available for all 28 SVAAAs or was not applicable to an SVAA because of its operating status at the time. The eight tables in Appendix B contain detailed information and data from these interviews.

Number of Academies and Victim Service Providers Trained:

The 28 SVAAAs had held a total of 224 academy sessions and trained approximately 12,000 victim service advocates and related professionals, with an average of 54 participants in each class. At least 12 of the 28 SVAAAs had also operated advanced-level academies, which have trained about half of the 12,000 victim service providers.

In general, the number of training sessions held and the number of persons trained are the best process indicators of a training program's success. However, in the case of the SVAA program, OVC has never set a minimum requirement for the number of academies an SVAA should hold each year, nor for the number of victim service providers that should be trained at each academy.

Types of Organizations Funded:

OVC funded three types of organizations as grantees for the SVAA program: academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and state agencies. In this way, OVC allowed each state, through a coordinated process at the state level, to choose the organization in the best position to operate the SVAA, regardless of



what type of entity that was. Of the 28 SVAAAs interviewed, 16 were state agencies, 3 were universities, and 9 were non-profit organizations.⁷

OAAM noted that all 4 SVAAAs that had closed (of the 28 SVAAAs interviewed) were operated by state agencies. While OAAM does not have information on the exact reason for their closures, anecdotal information offered by the SVAA representatives indicated that their closures were due to circumstances beyond their control. OAAM concluded that SVAAAs operated by state agencies may be more vulnerable to political forces than a university or non-profit organization would be, particularly as governing administrations change. However, because 12 other state agencies have continued to operate their SVAAAs after OVC grant funding ended, it does not appear that the organizational type would necessarily have an effect on sustainability.

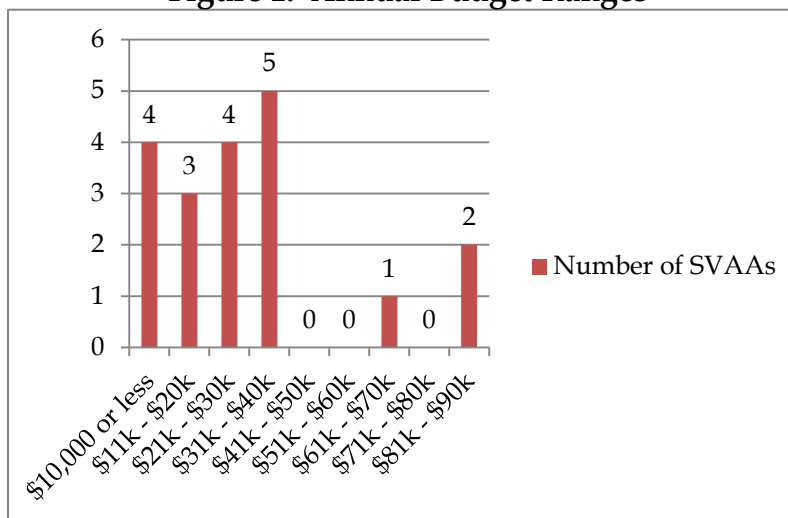
SVAA Budgets:

Twenty of the 28 SVAAAs interviewed were able to provide the total annual budgets for their SVAAAs most recent operating year. The annual budgets ranged from a low of \$7,000 to a high of \$85,000, not including salaries, and the majority of them were less than the funding levels provided by the OVC grants. The lowest annual budgets funded only materials and classroom space, while higher ones included more costly items, such as student lodging. All of the budgets included materials and most (18) paid for classroom space. Figure 1 below presents a breakdown of number of SVAA budgets in each \$10K increment.

⁷ As of August 2012, OVC has funded 23 state agencies, 6 universities, and 11 non-profit organizations as SVAA grantees.



Figure 1: Annual Budget Ranges



Source: Interviews and follow-up questionnaires

Table 3 below presents a breakdown of the number of SVAAAs, of the 20 that responded, that said they included one or more of the listed items in their budgets.

Table 3: Items Included in SVAA Budgets*

Student Lodging	Food	Scholarships	Classroom Space	Materials	Honorarium or Speaker Fees	Multiple Academies
11 (55%)	16 (80%)	9 (45%)	18 (90%)	20 (100%)	16 (80%)	13 (65%)

Source: Interviews and follow-up questionnaires

*The numbers in this table do not add up to 20 because most of the SVAAAs examined funded multiple items in their budgets.

SVAA Funding Sources:

Twenty-five of the 28 SVAAAs (86%) used multiple funding sources to operate their academies, and all but five charged registration fees to participants to attend the course. Fourteen of the 28 SVAAAs received at least some funding from their state Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant program. Two of the SVAAAs were successful in obtaining a state budget line item, which was one of the most stable funding sources of all of the SVAAAs interviewed. Table 4 below presents the number of SVAAAs who used each of the funding sources listed to operate their SVAAAs.



Table 4: SVAA Funding Sources*

OVC SVAA Grant	State Budget Line Item	State Agency Funds	VOCA Funds	Other Federal Grants	Offender Fees	SVAA Registration Fees	Donations	Other
5 (18%)	2 (7%)	10 (36%)	14 (50%)	4 (14%)	2 (7%)	23 (82%)	2 (7%)	3 (11%)

Source: Interviews and follow-up questionnaires

*The numbers in this table do not add up to 28 because most of the SVAAAs examined used multiple funding sources to support their programs.

Registration Fees:

Twenty-two of the 28 SVAAAs interviewed (79%) used registration fees to partially fund their programs, and another SVAA used registration fees to completely fund its program. The fees ranged from \$50 per person to \$518 per person. Some of the SVAAAs that charged lower registration fees noted that these fees were used simply to ensure that participants who registered for the training actually showed up, rather than used as a true source of funding for the SVAA. Another SVAA official commented that charging a registration fee was also a way to add legitimacy to the academy, in that offering the training at no cost to participants may send the message that the training was not valuable enough to warrant a charge.

Use of CEUs/Academic Credit:

Eighteen of the 28 SVAAAs (64%) offered participants continuing education units (CEUs) for attending the SVAA, while 8 of the SVAAAs (29%) also offered participants the opportunity to obtain college credit from the academic partner for attending the course, usually by completing an additional research paper. Several of the SVAA officials interviewed stated that few, if any, participants had ever taken advantage of the opportunity for academic credit, and that some SVAAAs that once offered academic credit had stopped, based on the lack of demand. In addition, several SVAA representatives noted that they did not think that offering CEUs or academic credit necessarily encouraged participants to choose the SVAA for their training needs.

Academy Format:

For their most recent academy, 16 of the 28 SVAAAs (57%) held a 40-hour, 5½-day academy, which is consistent with the NVAA model. Other SVAAAs have held longer or shorter academies, while others have steered away from the NVAA model and have held their academies, for example, one day a week for multiple weeks. Five of the 28 SVAAAs had also added an online component to their



courses. Many of the SVAA officials interviewed noted that networking was an important aspect of the academy and thought that a residential setting was important to facilitate networking. For that reason, most of the SVAAAs have been operating residential programs, like the NVAA, with some being held on university campuses and others being held at hotel meeting rooms or training centers.

Entry-Level vs. Advanced SVAA Academies:

Although the goal of the SVAA program is to create an introductory course for victim service providers in each state, several of the 28 SVAAAs were also offering leadership or advanced academies in addition to basic, and in some cases, in place of basic training. At least 12 of the 28 SVAAAs (43%) have operated advanced-level academies, which have trained about half of the 12,000 victim service providers, while three SVAAAs have offered leadership training. As shown in Table 3, the total number of trained participants in the advanced academies exceeds the total number of trained participants in the basic academies by 39 participants. Average class sizes varied significantly, with basic level training having an average class size of 40 participants, while advanced training had more than twice that number with 83 students per class. The large number of participants trained in advanced and leadership academies may be attributable to shortened formats, as these were usually one-day courses, which can be offered more often and accommodate larger numbers of people, especially if the sessions are primarily informational and not geared to an adult learning style. Table 5 below displays a breakdown of the number of participants trained and the average class size, by academy type.

Table 5: Breakdown by Academy Type

Academy Type	Number of Academies	Number of Participants	Average Class Size
Basic	146	5,883	40
Advanced	71	5,922	83
Leadership	7	225	32

Source: Interviews and follow-up questionnaires

OAAM analyzed the characteristics across all of the 28 SVAAAs interviewed to see if any patterns emerged among the different classifications of SVAAAs. However, OAAM determined that many of the same characteristics were present in each of the 28 SVAAAs and that there were no discernible patterns between or among the SVAAAs that were consistently operating, those that were marginally operating, or those that had closed.



However, based on the analysis, OAAM determined that more than half of the SVAAAs interviewed were:

- still operating;
- operated by a state agency (probably because most grantees were state agencies);
- holding a residential academy that is 40 hours and 5 ½ days in length, and consistent with the NVAA model;
- using multiple funding sources to fund their programs;
- charging a registration fee to participants; and
- offering CEUs to participants, but not academic credit.



Section II: Sustainability Factors and Commonalities Among SVAA's Operating After OVC Funding Ended

While no pattern clearly emerged from the descriptive characteristics examined, none of these characteristics were necessarily expected to influence the longevity of an SVAA program. Therefore, OAAM conducted a second level of analysis to examine additional factors that published literature has deemed important for achieving sustainability, as well as factors that OVC has deemed important for the grant program and included in its solicitation requirements.

For this analysis, OAAM examined only the 20 SVAA's of the 28 interviewed that had continued to operate after their OVC grant funding had ended. OAAM did not include the four SVAA's that were recent grantees and had not yet operated independent of OVC grant funding or the four SVAA's that had closed.

OAAM examined these additional sustainability factors to see if they were prevalent in the SVAA's that had achieved longevity. By doing so, OAAM hoped to confirm what the literature on sustainability cited and/or to validate the importance of the items that OVC had required of its SVAA grantees. The factors OAAM examined for their impact on the sustainability and the results of that analysis are described below:

Dedicated Representative/Steering Committee:

Literature on sustainability often mentions the importance of a strong leader or dedicated representative in securing funding and maintaining high visibility for a program. Similarly, OVC requires SVAA grantees to form a diverse steering committee to develop their SVAA's in order to ensure a broad base of support for the program, and to provide access to multiple potential funding sources for future sustainability.

Of the 20 SVAA interviewed that were still in operation, 10 of them stated that their SVAA's had a dedicated representative and 13 of the SVAA's stated that their SVAA's still had a steering committee in place. In total, 18 of the 20 SVAA's had one or both of these in place. This data indicates that having a strong leader and/or a steering committee is important for the longevity of an SVAA after federal funding ends, which is consistent with literature on sustainability and validates the need for a steering committee beyond the OVC grant funding period.



Academic Partner Involvement:

OVC requires SVAA grantees to partner with an academic institution to assist in the development and operation of their programs. The academic partner is intended to serve as a subject matter expert to inform the SVAA's curriculum regarding current laws and practices, as well as provide evidenced-based information on victimology. In addition, the academic partner is intended to be a financial resource to the SVAA by potentially providing classroom space, lodging for participants, and academy instructors to the SVAA at little or no cost.

Five of the 20 SVAAAs (25%) were no longer operating with the assistance of an academic partner. The remaining fifteen SVAAAs were still operating in partnership with an academic institution, but the extent of that partnership varied and was not necessarily significant. In most cases, the SVAAAs that no longer partnered with an academic institution were operated by training departments within a state agency or a non-profit organization that was in the business of providing training. These SVAA representatives stated that their SVAAAs already had the resources in-house that they would have received from an academic partner. Similarly, other SVAAAs that no longer had an academic partner stated that their advisory board or steering committee was able to provide the subject-matter expertise and other information they needed to keep the SVAA's curriculum current.

Multiple Funding Sources:

Literature on sustainability often mentions the importance of maintaining a broad funding base so that organizations can maintain operations if one funding source changes or is eliminated. For this reason, the use of, or access to, multiple funding sources may play a key role in the longevity of a program.

Of the 20 SVAAAs interviewed which continue to operate, 18 used multiple funding sources as part of their annual budgets. Twelve of the 20 SVAAAs used VOCA funding to partially support their programs, and 7 of the 12 state agencies received some funding directly from their agencies to operate their SVAAAs. In addition, almost all of the SVAAAs charged registration fees to participants.

Although most of the SVAAAs used multiple funding sources to operate, in many cases, the SVAAAs did so in order to weave together a patchwork of funding to continue operating for another year. These SVAAAs reported that they would have preferred to use one stable funding source to fund their entire SVAA



program, rather than have to piece together multiple pots of money. The most desirable funding source reported by the SVAAAs interviewed was the state budget line item, which 2 of the 20 SVAAAs had obtained. In these two cases, the SVAAAs used only the state budget line item and registration fees to fund their programs.

OAAM also compared the number of older SVAAAs (i.e., FY 2006 and prior) to the newer SVAAAs (i.e., FY 2007 through FY 2009) to determine if the older SVAAAs were using fewer funding sources as their programs have matured, which could indicate that older SVAAAs were able to find more stable funding sources. However, OAAM found no discernible difference between the number of funding sources used by the older and newer SVAAAs.

Strategic/Sustainability Planning:

Literature on sustainability often mentions strategic and/or sustainability planning as a critical first step for a program to prepare itself to sustain future operations. In accordance with this view, OVC requires that its SVAA grantees develop sustainability plans, which describe potential resources for sustaining the SVAA after OVC funding ends. According to OVC staff, the sustainability plan is a deliverable for grantees to submit during the first year of the grant program. However, OVC does not require grantees to update and resubmit their sustainability plans during the subsequent two years of the grant program to reflect changing circumstances or the identification of new, post-grant funding opportunities. (See Recommendation 1.)

Despite the known value of such planning, only 3 of the 20 SVAAAs stated that they continued to develop or update a strategic or sustainability plan for their programs. Although most of the SVAAAs that continue to operate do not use strategic or sustainability planning, OAAM would not conclude that the longevity of these SVAAAs had any relationship to their lack of planning, nor would OAAM recommend that OVC stop requiring SVAA grantees to prepare a sustainability plan. Rather, OVC should continue to emphasize the value of planning for sustainment.

Based on OAAM's analysis of these four additional factors, it appears that only one of these factors may have contributed to the longevity of the 20 sustained SVAAAs interviewed. Specifically, the presence of a strong leader or dedicated representative for an SVAA and/or the continued use of a steering committee by the SVAA may assist SVAAAs in achieving longevity for their programs.



As funding is the ultimate determinant of longevity, OAAM noted that some SVAAAs have taken innovative steps to try to reduce their operating expenses. Specifically, two SVAAAs in geographically small states have changed the course schedule to hold their academies as a non-residential course, once a week, over several weeks (e.g., five consecutive Tuesdays), instead of as a week-long event. This approach allows the SVAAAs to save on lodging and food costs for instructors and participants because participants could commute to and from the training. Three other SVAAAs have added an online component to the training and have shortened the classroom portion to 2 or 3 days, while other SVAAAs have just shortened the classroom portion of the course to save money. Some SVAAAs have even moved to holding the academy biennially, instead of every year, to lower costs and to meet reduced demand for the course in tough economic times. The innovative approaches employed by these SVAAAs have enabled them to continue to hold an academy with less funding and, therefore, provide a possible approach for other SVAAAs who are also facing funding challenges. However, OAAM realizes that shortening the number of days an academy is held, often means reducing the scope of the curriculum as well. Therefore, the quality of the program may suffer if critical information has to be eliminated from the training due to time constraints.

OAAM also discovered that states with a state-level requirement for victim services training for those in the field, or even a state requirement to attend the SVAA, are in a better position to continue operating from year to year. Specifically, if a state requires professionals in the victim services field to be certified or obtain a minimum number of hours of training each year, then the state is more likely to provide, or support, the required training programs. Accordingly, organizations employing victim services professionals would likely be obligated to pay for their employees to attend training at courses, such as an SVAA. OAAM identified four states that had instituted a requirement for participants to attend their SVAAAs or other victim services training. While some SVAAAs expressed interest in having such a training requirement in their states, others were strongly resistant to the idea because of the possibility that it might reduce the size of the victim services field in their states. In particular, SVAA representatives expressed concern that state-level training requirements would force out victim services providers who could not afford the courses, or limit eligibility of providers to testify in court to only those with the required training.



Section III: The OVC Grant Program

The SVAA program has been largely successful as a seed money program, with the majority of SVAAAs continuing to operate after their OVC grant funding ended. As of August 2012, it appears that, of the 40 grantees which OVC has funded over the course of the grant program, 80 percent of them (32 grantees) are still operating.

In the process of reviewing the SVAA grant program and conducting interviews with current and former grantees, as well as OVC and OVC TTAC staff, OAAM identified several steps that OVC should consider to improve the current grant program. In addition, OAAM has identified some issues that OVC should consider addressing in planning for the future of the grant program and in assessing the quality of the training provided by SVAAAs already in place. These issues are described below:

Current SVAA Program:

With respect to the SVAA grant program as it is currently operating, OAAM identified four areas where OVC should consider making changes or improvements to the program. These areas include the: 1) program's performance measures; 2) role of the academic partner in an SVAA; 3) amount of funding provided to grantees each year; and 4) termination of the cluster meetings.

Performance Measures:

The performance measures that SVAA grantees are required to report have not changed significantly since the inception of the program. Table 6 below presents the list of the SVAA performance measures.



Table 6: SVAA Performance Measures

Objective	Performance Measure(s)	Data Grantee Provides
Continue a diverse planning/steering committee to guide the strategy/ implementation of an SVAA.	Number of diverse planning/steering committee meetings held.	List of steering committee members and dates when meeting held (meeting minutes, etc.).
	Number of grantees that continue a diverse planning/steering committee.	Total number of grantees that continue a diverse planning/steering committee.
Continue a viable partnership with an academic college/university to help in the planning process for implementation of the state academy.	Number of partnerships established with colleges/universities.	Total number of partnerships established with colleges/universities.
Complete and analyze a statewide training needs assessment.	Number of participants that analyzed and utilized the results from the training needs assessment to direct curriculum development.	Provide evidence from the training needs assessment to include training needs assessment tool, focus group questionnaires, and the completed analysis.
Develop a resource development plan for sustaining the program after OVC funding ends.	Number of grantees that have a sustainability plan.	Copy of sustainability plan.
Implement an SVAA.	Number of states that implement an SVAA.	Documentation of SVAA implementation.

Source: FY 2011 SVAA program solicitation

In most cases, the performance measures included in the solicitations are not measures of performance, but are instead required deliverables that must be submitted in the first year of the grant program. For example, grantees are required to conduct a training needs assessment. The performance measure asks the grantee to “Provide evidence from the training needs assessment to include training needs assessment tool, focus group questionnaires, and the completed analysis,” which is, essentially, the training needs assessment deliverable. In addition, the performance measures are primarily relevant to first year activities (i.e., steering committee formation; academic partnership formation; and training needs assessment), but not to years two and three of the SVAA program.

OVC should consider measures that capture performance as SVAAAs evolve, specifically as planning activities end and the training academies are actually held. OVC should also consider changing these performance measures to collect information that it would not already collect from grantees in the form of



deliverables, and to make them more relevant for grantees that are in their second or third year of grant funding. While there may not be many performance measures which OVC can use that directly relate to the development and implementation of an SVAA, there may be information that may otherwise be beneficial for OVC to collect about these SVAA's and their academy partners. For example, for each reporting period, it may be valuable for OVC to know:

- the number and type (i.e., basic, leadership, advanced) of academy sessions held by the SVAA;
- the number of participants trained by the SVAA;
- the professions of SVAA participants;
- the participants' level of experience in the victim services field (e.g., entry-level, intermediate, advanced);
- whether the SVAA's academic partner had integrated victim issues into any of its courses or added a separate course or degree program in victimology;
- the results of course evaluations and pre and post-testing;
- the grantee's use of industry standard practices in the development of training materials and curriculum;
- the number of instructors trained by the grantee to deliver the SVAA curriculum; and
- the number of times the grantee contacted OVC TTAC and the type of technical assistance sought.

In addition, OAAM noted that the performance measures under the heading: "Data Grantee Provides," are measures for OVC, and not for individual grantees. For example, the performance measure on the number of academic partnerships formed appears to be a measure to determine the total number of SVAA partnerships formed across the SVAA grantee population. This measure is therefore somewhat confusing, as individual SVAA's are not expected to form multiple partnerships with academic institutions. OVC should consider rewording its performance measures to reflect the data to be provided by individual SVAA's. (See Recommendation 2.)



Role of the Academic Partner:

SVAA program applicants are required to obtain the commitment of an accredited college or university to assist in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their SVAA. According to the FY 2011 SVAA solicitation for new applicants, the college or university academic partner is generally expected to host and promote the SVAA, provide academic credit to SVAA participants, provide classroom space for the academy, and provide lodging and meals to students, as necessary. In addition, with assistance from the SVAA's steering committee, the academic partner is expected to "help oversee the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the project." The solicitation also states that the academic partner should have departments in subjects related to the SVAA, such as criminal justice, victim services, social work, counseling, human services, and curriculum design, or, at a minimum, faculty with expertise in these subjects.

OAAM determined that the involvement of the academic partner varied among SVAAAs. Specifically, at least 15 of the 28 SVAAAs interviewed have never held, or are no longer holding, their academies on the campuses of their academic partners, either because of the limited times of year the academy can be held on campus (i.e., summer) or because participants complained about having to stay in dormitories. Additionally, while at least 18 of the 28 SVAAAs have offered continuing education units to participants, only about 8 of the SVAAAs have offered participants the opportunity to receive academic credit for attending the SVAA, whether from the academic partner or from another college or university. During interviews with OAAM, representatives from 5 of the 28 SVAAAs specifically mentioned that they no longer rely on the assistance of an academic partner to operate their programs. Also, as noted in Section II of the report, OAAM also determined that the involvement of an academic partner does not predict the future sustainability of an SVAA.

OVC should further examine why some SVAAAs have chosen to stop partnering with an academic institution to operate their SVAAAs, and whether requiring new SVAA grantees to use the services of an academic partner is necessary. If OVC determines that an academic partner should still be a program requirement, OVC should define and emphasize what role the academic partner should play in the long-term operations of an SVAA, in order to encourage SVAAAs to continue to have an academic partner after their OVC grant funding ends. (See Recommendation 3.)



Grant Funding Levels:

During interviews, officials from two SVAAAs noted that the OVC grant program provides too much funding to grantees to hold the actual academy during the last two years of the grant period (i.e., \$100,000 in Year 2 and \$60,000 in Year 3). The officials noted that this level of funding creates an expectation among SVAAAs that an academy requires that level of funding to operate each year. As noted in the data results in Section I, many SVAAAs have found that an academy can be operated using much less funding than was awarded by OVC to establish and initially operate their SVAAAs. Further, as OVC has awarded the same amount to all grantees since the SVAA grant program began in 1999, it does not appear that these amounts have been reevaluated to determine whether they remain appropriate, or should be higher or lower. OVC should conduct further analysis to determine the optimum amount of funding for new SVAA grantees. If OVC determines that new SVAA grantees can be provided with reduced award amounts, OVC should consider whether the remaining funding should be used for other purposes to support the program, such as assisting established SVAAAs who are struggling financially to remain open. (See Recommendation 4.)

Cluster Meetings:

Almost all of the SVAA officials stated during interviews that they benefited from the SVAA cluster meetings, which were held annually by OVC until 2009. The SVAA officials also stated that they preferred the cluster meetings to the quarterly conference calls that OVC now holds. According to OVC staff, the SVAA cluster meetings were discontinued because they were primarily for the benefit of former, rather than current, OVC grantees.

For the purpose of meeting its program goals, it is in OVC's best interest to help all SVAAAs remain in operation and to facilitate the sharing of information among them, which could help them to do so. For this reason, OVC should consider reinstating the cluster meetings or try to develop a cost effective alternative to the meetings that is more interactive than the quarterly conference calls. OAAM acknowledges that there are now additional constraints to OVC hosting conferences, but OVC should consider available alternatives, such as resuming the cluster meetings, but requiring SVAA representatives to pay for their own travel and lodging costs to attend. (See Recommendation 5.)



Future SVAA Program:

As more states and territories receive SVAA grants each year and implement academies, the goals for the SVAA program and the purpose of the SVAA grants may need to change. Essentially, the SVAA program is running out of potential grantees, and the SVAAAs that are currently operating may not be offering relevant, accurate, and quality training, especially if they have veered significantly from the NVAA curriculum. OAAM identified two areas that OVC should address when considering the next steps for the SVAA program. These areas include: 1) determining what the goals should be for the SVAA program in the future in selecting grantees; and 2) how to ensure that the SVAAAs in operation meet and maintain standards for quality and consistency.

Program Goals:

According to OVC program staff, the overall goal of the SVAA program is to establish a network of SVAAAs by establishing an academy in every state and territory. As of August 2012, OVC has funded 40 grantees, including 39 states,⁸ 1 territory, and the District of Columbia. OVC plans to issue SVAA grants to three additional states for FY 2012. Therefore, only 8 states and 4 territories will still be eligible to apply for an SVAA grant in FY 2013.

At least 1 of the 8 states that is still eligible to apply for an SVAA grant already has an SVAA in place. In addition, only three of these states have ever applied for an SVAA grant during the life of the program and thereby indicated an interest in implementing an SVAA in their state. For these reasons, there may be a very small pool of potential grantees left for OVC to fund in the future. Further, as noted in Section I, many SVAAAs have begun providing advanced and leadership academies in addition to, or in lieu of, basic training. This trend may indicate that more advanced training is needed for victim service providers than entry-level training. OVC should consider this information in determining whether the focus of the SVAA program should remain on entry-level training. (See Recommendation 6.)

It also appears that 8 of the 40 SVAA grantees that OVC has funded since the beginning of the program have stopped operating their academies. However, at least one of the four closed SVAAAs that OAAM interviewed was interested in applying for an SVAA grant for a second time to try to implement and sustain an

⁸ One grant was awarded to two states to jointly develop and operate an SVAA.



SVAA with a new management team and approach. This state would not currently be eligible to apply for a second SVAA grant, but if OVC's ultimate goal is to have an SVAA in every state, it should consider how to deal with these states whose SVAAAs have closed. OVC may find that awarding grants to past grantees that were not able to sustain their programs may be a valuable next step in order for OVC to meet the overall goal of the SVAA program. Similarly, several SVAAAs officials stated during interviews with OAAM that their SVAAAs were struggling to find funding, particularly in the current economy. If OVC wants to ensure that as many past grantees as possible are able to keep their SVAAAs open, OVC may want to examine ways it can support struggling SVAAAs, especially if it finds that the pool of potential new applicants has been exhausted. Based on all of these issues, OVC may find it helpful to update its goals to reflect different priorities that are more applicable to the current status of the SVAA program. (See Recommendation 7.)

Quality Training:

As noted previously, in order for an SVAA to be considered successful, the SVAA needs to achieve longevity and it also needs to deliver quality training tailored to meet the needs of that state's victim service providers. OVC recognized the importance of quality in the development of an SVAA and in the delivery of training, and has required SVAA grantees to conduct a needs assessment, as well as encouraged them to use the resources available from OVC TTAC for developing curriculum, training instructors, and conducting testing and evaluation.

In order to determine whether the SVAAAs understood the need to maintain the quality of their academy content and whether they used industry standard procedures in developing and delivering their training programs, OAAM asked the SVAA representatives interviewed whether they had been performing any of the following activities since their OVC grant funding ended:

- conducting periodic needs assessments;
- using the services of a trained curriculum developer;
- periodically reviewing and updating the SVAA curriculum;
- conducting pilot training prior to course delivery to participants;
- having participants evaluate the training;
- conducting pre and post-testing of participants; and
- following up with participants after the training is complete.



For the 21 SVAAAs that responded to this set of questions, Table 7 below displays the activities that each of the SVAA representatives stated that they employed to maintain and improve the quality of their programs. Based on these responses, OAAM determined that conducting follow-up evaluations and pre and post-testing were the most commonly used of the six activities examined. However, none of the SVAAAs stated that they performed all six of the activities to maintain the quality of their programs, and only 6 of the 21 respondents (29%) stated that they used 4 or 5 of the activities.

Table 7: SVAA Use of Activities to Improve Quality of Training

Periodically Conduct Needs Assessment	Used Trained Developer to Develop Curriculum*	Use Trained Developer to Update Curriculum**	Pilot Trainings or Updates	Conduct Pre and Post-Testing	Conduct Follow-Up Evaluations
10 (48%)	10 (53%)	7 (35%)	3 (14%)	12 (57%)	15 (71%)

Source: Interviews and follow-up questionnaires

*Only 19 of the 21 respondents were able to answer this question. Two of the SVAA representatives questioned did not know whether their SVAA used a trained curriculum developer to develop the curriculum.

**Only 20 of the 21 respondents were able to answer this question. One of the SVAA representatives questioned did not know whether his SVAA used a trained curriculum developer to update its curriculum.

OAAM is not able to draw any conclusions about the quality of individual SVAA training programs from the questions asked of SVAAAs about the degree to which they employ industry standards for training in developing their SVAAAs. However, the fact that, in most cases, fewer than half of the respondents indicated that they employed an industry standard practice in the development of their SVAA training may support concerns raised by OVC TTAC about the general quality and consistency of some SVAA training programs that are operating post-OVC grant funding. The fact that several SVAAAs have dropped their academic partners and/or may not be fully utilizing OVC TTAC’s resources to develop and deliver their trainings is an additional concern.

Further, although each SVAA was to develop a state-specific course of study for its academy, the NVAA curriculum was intended to be the source of information regarding the national aspects of victim services that are included in an SVAA’s curriculum. However, OVC TTAC staff noted that some SVAAAs are customizing the national portion of the curriculum as well. This practice may not only be an inefficient use of an SVAA’s limited resources, but may also lead to the presentation of inaccurate or non-standardized information.



To address this problem, OVC TTAC staff suggested that OVC create a “virtual national academy” that would contain all of the general entry-level information that victim service providers should know. The virtual academy could be offered as a prerequisite to participants attending an SVAA’s state-specific course. In doing so, SVAAAs could focus their funding on developing courses around their states’ specific laws, issues, and procedures and not spend time and money trying to adapt the national curriculum to their needs. OVC TTAC envisions a high-quality virtual course which tests participant knowledge and verifies the participant’s grasp of the concepts. In addition, the use of blended learning, with a combination of virtual training for national issues and in-person training for state-specific issues, may be the best way to reach the needs of a variety of different learners. (See Recommendation 8.)

OVC TTAC staff also expressed concerns about the quality of the state-specific curriculum being offered by some SVAAAs. As states have veered farther away from the NVAA model or shortened their courses to meet funding limitations, the quality of the information presented may have been compromised. An SVAA offering poor quality training may not only harm academy participants by not providing them with accurate information and critical skills, but may also end up harming victims if the victim service provider believes they are properly trained when they are not.

For these reasons, it is in OVC’s best interest to develop ways to ensure that SVAAAs are providing quality curriculum and instruction, even after the grant period is over. To do so, OVC should identify methods to evaluate the training courses being provided by the individual SVAAAs and to ensure that they continue to meet OVC and industry standards for quality. Based on the results of these evaluations, OVC and OVC TTAC could then provide customized technical assistance to SVAAAs with deficiencies. OAAM acknowledges that OVC is faced with funding constraints that may limit its ability to conduct these evaluations. However, as part of achieving OVC’s overall goal of establishing a network of SVAAAs across the country, it is essential that all SVAAAs provide quality services. (See Recommendation 9.)

Use of OVC TTAC Resources

In interviews with OVC TTAC staff, concerns were raised that SVAAAs were not taking full advantage of the resources offered by TTAC. In the follow-up questions issued to the SVAAAs, 19 responded to questions pertaining to their use of OVC TTAC resources. As shown in Table 8 below, OAAM determined that



instruction in adult-learning principles was the most commonly used resource offered by OVC TTAC and also the only resource used by over half of the follow-up respondents. OVC TTAC resources supporting curriculum design and instructor training were also used relatively frequently. The responses indicate that resources for conducting a needs assessment or evaluation were not commonly used.

Table 8: SVAA Use of OVC TTAC Resources

Curriculum Design	Adult-Learning Principles	Needs Assessment	Evaluation	Training Instructors
8 (42%)	10 (53%)	4 (21%)	4 (21%)	7 (37%)

Source: Interviews and follow-up questionnaires

OAAM did not note any correlation between an SVAA’s use of OVC TTAC resources and whether it sustained its program. However, in the interest of promoting quality instruction and materials, OVC should examine ways to better promote the services available through OVC TTAC and continue to offer resources to current and former SVAA grantees. OVC should also ensure that OVC TTAC offers the services that most benefit SVAA in their efforts to deliver quality training. (See Recommendation 10.)

Once OVC grant funding ends, OVC does not control any of the long-term outcomes that are implicit in the goals that it set for the program. However, if SVAA continue to operate after OVC grant funding ends, and they are able to offer a quality training program that meets the needs of the victim service providers in their states, they stand a better chance of professionalizing the victim service provider field, equipping providers with knowledge and skills to better serve victims, and, ultimately, better serving victims of crime. Better serving victims of crime is the best indicator of long-term success for the SVAA program and aligns with the Department of Justice’s goals to increase the fair administration of justice⁹ and to better serve victims of crime.¹⁰ OVC’s SVAA program provides grantees with the resources, support, and tools to develop sustainable, quality training programs, and gives them the best opportunity to ultimately better serve victims of crime.

⁹ U.S. Department of Justice, Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2012 - 2016, Goal Number 3.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Justice, Strategic Plan, Fiscal Years 2012 - 2016, Objective 2.2.



Conclusion

The SVAA program has been largely successful in using seed money to establish SVAAAs across the country. The majority of these academies are still operating, with many having maintained the format set forth in the NVAA model. Other SVAAAs have adapted their venue, course length, and other features to meet budget challenges and/or better meet their state's training needs for victim service providers.

OAAM was not able to identify common characteristics among SVAAAs that operated beyond the funding provided by OVC, except to note that sustained SVAAAs were more likely to have a dedicated representative and/or an advisory board. These SVAAAs also incorporated many of the factors recommended in literature on sustainability, including maintaining a broad funding base.

OAAM also identified several steps that OVC should consider to improve the current grant program, including updating the performance measures and clarifying the role of the academic partner. In addition, OAAM has identified some issues that OVC should consider addressing regarding the future of the grant program, including how to ensure that former SVAA grantees continue to offer quality training that meets the needs of victim services providers going forward.

Recommendations

OAAM recommends that OVC:

1. Require grantees to complete and submit a new or updated sustainability plan to OVC during each year of the grant program.
2. Re-evaluate the performance measures used for the SVAA program and determine whether other performance measures would provide more beneficial information to OVC about the program and the SVAA participants trained, and/or provide clearer wording of the performance measures for grantees.
3. Provide clearer guidance to grantees on the role academic partners should play in the long-term operation of an SVAA, particularly in initiating a victim course of study.
4. Conduct further analysis to determine the optimum amount of funding for new SVAA grantees. If OVC determines that new SVAA grantees can be provided with reduced award amounts, it should consider whether the remaining funding



- should be used for other purposes to support the program, such as assisting established SVAAAs who are struggling financially to remain open.
5. Consider reinstating the cluster meetings or a cost effective alternative that provides SVAAAs with a more interactive format.
 6. Re-evaluate the requirement to develop entry-level training if states can demonstrate a greater need for offering victim service providers advanced or leadership training.
 7. Update the goals for the SVAA program to reflect new program expectations and a strategy for the future.
 8. Explore development of a virtual national academy that would serve as the national basic level training for all victim service providers.
 9. Based on availability of funding, consider identifying methods to evaluate the quality of the curriculum and instruction of SVAAAs that continue to operate after the OVC award period.
 10. Examine ways to better promote the services available through OVC TTAC and continue to offer resources to current and former SVAA grantees, and ensure that OVC TTAC offers the services that most benefit SVAAAs in their efforts to deliver quality training.

OVC's Comments and OAAM's Response

OAAM provided a draft of its report to OVC for comments. OVC's comments on the recommendations and OAAM's responses are summarized below. See Appendix C for the full text of OVC's comments.

- 1. Require grantees to complete and submit a new or updated sustainability plan to OVC during each year of the grant program.**

OVC agreed with this recommendation and stated that it will include this requirement in the FY 2013 program solicitation for new SVAAAs. OVC will also assess the sustainability plans submitted by SVAA grantees each year.

Based on OVC's response, OAAM considers this recommendation open, but resolved. To close this recommendation, OVC needs to provide a copy of the



FY 2013 program solicitation for new SVAAAs, reflecting OVC's changes to the sustainability plan requirements.

- 2. Re-evaluate the performance measures used for the SVAA program and determine whether other performance measures would provide more beneficial information to OVC about the program and the SVAA participants trained, and/or provide clearer wording of the performance measures for grantees.**

OVC agreed with this recommendation and stated that it will review the program's performance measures to ensure that they clarify exactly what information SVAA grantees are to report. OVC will include the clarified performance measures in the FY 2013 program solicitation for new SVAAAs.

Based on OVC's response, OAAM considers this recommendation open, but resolved. To close this recommendation, OVC needs to provide a copy of the FY 2013 program solicitation for new SVAAAs, reflecting OVC's changes or additions to the program's performance measures.

- 3. Provide clearer guidance to grantees on the role academic partners should play in the long-term operation of an SVAA, particularly in initiating a victim course of study.**

OVC agreed with this recommendation and stated that it will review the role of academic partners in the context of a larger-scale evaluation it is contemplating for the SVAA program. OVC noted that, in determining whether an academic partner should remain a program requirement, OVC wants to ensure that it does not lose sight of its long-term goal to integrate victim services curricula into postsecondary education to better equip graduates as they enter the victim services field. OVC also noted that if SVAAAs are turning to the expertise of the steering committee membership for the services that an academic partner would otherwise provide, then more attention needs to be paid to the SVAAAs' process for updating their curricula from year-to-year, including recommending that SVAAAs use a trained curriculum developer and a subject matter expert to update their curricula. Although the current SVAA model recommends the use of an academic partner for new and developing SVAAAs, OVC recognizes that this role may change as an SVAA matures. OVC also stated that it will review the role of the academic partner in SVAAAs at various stages of development in an effort to identify promising practices, and may include any promising practices it identifies in future SVAA solicitations.



Based on OVC's response, OAAM considers this recommendation open, but resolved. To close this recommendation, OVC needs to provide a copy of the FY 2013 program solicitation for new SVAAAs, which should include additional information for new applicants on OVC's vision for the short and long-term role of an academic partner. In addition, OVC should document that it has provided guidance to current and former grantees that clarifies the role of an academic partner.

- 4. Conduct further analysis to determine the optimum amount of funding for new SVAA grantees. If OVC determines that new SVAA grantees can be provided with reduced award amounts, it should consider whether the remaining funding should be used for other purposes to support the program, such as assisting established SVAAAs who are struggling financially to remain open.**

OVC agreed with this recommendation and stated that it recognizes that many SVAAAs have struggled to find alternate funding after their OVC awards have ended, and also acknowledged that program sustainment is an imperative issue for SVAAAs. OVC stated that, in order to increase sustainability planning efforts, OVC will change the funding approach for the SVAA program, beginning with the FY 2013 program solicitation for new SVAAAs. OVC will now offer a 5-year funding stream with \$35,000 awarded in the first year and \$40,000 awarded in each of the subsequent 4 years of the program. OVC noted that it has consulted with the Office of General Counsel on this 5-year funding cycle approach.

Based on OVC's response, OAAM considers this recommendation open, but resolved. To close this recommendation, OVC needs to provide a copy of the FY 2013 program solicitation for new SVAAAs, reflecting the new funding approach OVC described.

- 5. Consider reinstating the cluster meetings or a cost effective alternative that provides SVAAAs with a more interactive format.**

OVC considered this recommendation, but stated that it would not support a cluster meeting for non-grantees, given the criteria now required for conference event approval. In addition, OVC noted that few programs receive the support that OVC has provided the SVAA effort, including: 1) the assignment of two technical assistance consultants to support SVAAAs in developing and implementing their curricula; 2) operating an SVAA learning community listserv for SVAAAs to share information on best practices; and 3) sponsoring quarterly conference calls among the SVAA community of current, former, and interested



SVAA administrators, where participation is not limited to past or present SVAA grantees.

Based on OVC's response, OAAM considers this recommendation closed.

6. Re-evaluate the requirement to develop entry-level training if states can demonstrate a greater need for offering victim service providers advanced or leadership training.

OVC agreed with this recommendation and acknowledged that that the entry-level training market for SVAAAs may be exhausted. OVC noted that depending on the application response to the FY 2013 program solicitation for new grantees, a solicitation for new SVAAAs may not be offered again for several years. Instead, OVC is considering offering support for specialized academy development, in topics such as leadership or trafficking, as a possibility for a future, separate solicitation.

Based on OVC's response, OAAM considers this recommendation closed.

7. Update the goals for the SVAA program to reflect new program expectations and a strategy for the future.

OVC agreed with this recommendation and stated that it is in the process of integrating the SVAA program into OVC's revamped approach to national scope training and technical assistance, under the guidance of a new SVAA program lead. Under its revamped approach, OVC will provide national scope training and technical assistance at the regional level, which OVC believes will deliver scarce training resources in a more strategic and cost-effective way. OVC also noted that it is working with OVC TTAC and other partners on projects that will likely impact how SVAAAs operate, including updating the victim assistance online training and releasing newly-updated model standards for serving victims and survivors of crime.

Based on OVC's response, OAAM considers this recommendation closed.



8. Explore development of a virtual national academy that would serve as the national basic level training for all victim service providers.

OVC agreed with this recommendation and stated that it has undertaken a complete reworking of its national academy program, which emphasizes distance learning approaches. OVC believes that this step, along with others, will permit the more effective use of its limited training and technical assistance resources.

Based on OVC's response, OAAM considers this recommendation closed.

9. Based on availability of funding, consider identifying methods to evaluate the quality of the curriculum and instruction of SVAAAs that continue to operate after the OVC award period.

OVC considered this recommendation, but stated that it does not have the funds necessary at this time to undertake this type of national evaluation. OVC noted that it has taken steps to ensure that SVAAAs have the necessary resources to deliver quality training by supporting two technical assistance consultants assigned to work with the SVAA community to develop and implement their curricula. Further, OVC noted that the newly-updated model standards for serving victims and survivors of crime, which are scheduled for release in 2013, will also inform training development.

Based on OVC's response, OAAM considers this recommendation closed.

10. Examine ways to better promote the services available through OVC TTAC and continue to offer resources to current and former SVAA grantees, and ensure that OVC TTAC offers the services that most benefit SVAAAs in their efforts to deliver quality training.

OVC agreed with this recommendation and stated that it will continue its work to improve the promotion of the services available through OVC TTAC and to ensure that OVC TTAC offers services that most benefit SVAAAs in their efforts to deliver quality training. OVC is also working to enhance the tools and resources available online and in the SVAA learning community. Further, OVC noted that the training and technical assistance resources provided through OVC TTAC are available to victim service providers generally, as well as allied organizations, and are not limited to current or former OVC grantees.

Based on OVC's response, OAAM considers this recommendation closed.



Appendix A: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The objectives of OAAM's assessment of OVC's SVAA grant program were to 1) examine the factors that contribute to the sustainability of SVAAAs, 2) identify innovative practices or challenges among states who received OVC funding to develop and sustain victim academies, and 3) identify steps that OVC can take to improve the SVAA grant program.

OAAM accomplished these objectives by reviewing published literature on program sustainability to identify factors that may be relevant to the sustainability of the SVAAAs, and then conducting interviews with current and former SVAA grantees to determine which of these factors are present in their operations. OAAM's initial literature review identified a number of published reports, which resulted in the identification of seven areas for review:

1. Organizational Structure

OAAM found organizational structure to be repeatedly cited as a critical aspect for sustaining a program. This aspect involves how an organization is staffed and structured, as well as how leadership plays a role in the organization. (Riki Savaya, Shimon Spiro, and Roni Elran-Barak, 2008; Marek and Mancini, 2007; York, 2009; Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2010).

2. Funding Sources

OAAM found that a successful organization or program needs to focus on obtaining a variety of funding sources to sustain its operations, and that a program should broaden its funding base by seeking financial support from multiple sources and levels. (Savaya, Spiro, and Elran-Barak, 2008; Marek and



Mancini, 2007; York, 2009; Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2010; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2009; American Indian Development Associates, 2001).

3. Marketing and Outreach

Much of the literature suggests that programs place marketing and outreach as high priorities to attain sustainability. Marketing and outreach also help to establish program visibility and develop sustainable relationships and partnerships with stakeholders. (Savaya, Spiro, and Elran-Barak, 2008; Marek and Mancini, 2007; Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2010; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2009; American Indian Development Associates, 2001).

4. Information Sharing

OAAM found that program leaders can benefit by sharing information with each other, including information on past and current implementation efforts. Sharing this information can help leaders explore the possibilities for their programs. (Marek and Mancini, 2007; York, 2009; Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2010; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2009).

5. Sustainability Planning

To sustain programs, published literature recommends that leaders plan activities that will help carry their work over the long term, as soon as possible. Specifically, leaders should identify components to sustain, and programmatic activities that are revenue generating, to support their work. (Savaya, Spiro, and Elran-Barak, 2008; Marek and Mancini, 2007; York, 2009; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

6. Strategic Planning

OAAM found that successful programs require leaders to develop a strategic plan for sustainability. A sound strategic plan may include partnering with universities and a focus on client needs. (Savaya, Spiro, and Elran-Barak, 2008; York, 2009; Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2010).



7. Success and Obstacles

Published literature emphasizes the importance of evaluating the program to identify successful efforts and the obstacles that have posed challenges to program implementation. Program leadership should also document these successes and disseminate this information to stakeholders. (Savaya, Spiro, and Elran-Barak, 2008; York, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

OAAM also examined the 2003 case study commissioned by NIJ and OVC on the five pilot SVAA grantees that were funded in 1999.¹¹ The case study examined the experience of five states (Colorado, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Utah) in implementing their SVAAAs. The goal of the study was to assist OVC, existing SVAAAs, and the victim services field with planning, implementing and sustaining successful SVAAAs. The report on these academies was based on a review of program documents, on-site interviews and focus groups with the SVAAAs' key stakeholders, and telephone interviews with a sample of students who participated in the academies. The key findings and lessons learned in the report summarized the 3-year span of activities by the five academies.

Based on the results of the literature review and the previous SVAA case study, OAAM developed a questionnaire to conduct interviews with current and former grantees. The questionnaire focused on 1) SVAA organizational structure, 2) funding sources, 3) marketing and outreach, 4) use of information sharing, 5) sustainability planning, 6) strategic planning, and 7) success and obstacles. OAAM requested interviews from all 34 current and former SVAAAs who remain in contact with OVC; however, only 28 of 34 grantees responded and participated in interviews. In addition, OAAM subsequently contacted all 28 of these grantees with a more detailed follow-up questionnaire. Only 21 of the 28 grantees responded to these questions and not all 21 of the grantees were able to provide answers to all of the questions. The results of the data collected by OAAM during both interview steps can be viewed in Appendix B.

¹¹ "State Victim Assistance Academy Case Studies: Lessons For The Field," prepared by Caliber Associates, Inc. for the National Institute of Justice, 2003.



Appendix B:

Data from SVAA Interviews and Follow-Up Questionnaires

Due to its sensitive nature, the data in this section has been redacted. For more information, please contact Maureen Henneberg, director of OAAM, at (202) 616-3282.



Appendix C: OVC Comments

The following pages contain the complete text of OVC's comments.





U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Office for Victims of Crime


Washington, D.C. 20531

MEMORANDUM TO: Maureen Henneberg
Director
Office of Audit, Assessment, and Management (OAAM)

Jan E. Carey
Deputy Director
Program Assessment Division, OAAM

THROUGH: Joye E. Frost 
Acting Director
Office for Victims of Crime (OVC)

Pamela Leupen 
Deputy Director
National Training and Program Development Division, OVC

FROM: Sharron Chapman 
Lead Victim Justice Specialist
National Training and Program Development Division, OVC

DATE: December 5, 2012

SUBJECT: Responses to recommendations contained in the Official Draft Report for the Assessment of OVC's State Victim Assistance Academy (SVAA) grant program

OVC would like to express its thanks to the OAAM staff who worked at length to craft this draft report that assesses OVC's SVAA grant program. All of the recommendations outlined in the draft report are addressed in this memorandum. Each response describes the actions that will be taken with respect to the issue identified. As you will see, OVC modified the SVAA (New) program and solicitation based on suggestions outlined in the draft report. Please do not hesitate to call me at 202-305-2358 if you have any questions or need additional information.



OVC's Responses to OAAM's Recommendations

1. Require grantees to complete and submit a new or updated sustainability plan to OVC during each year of the grant program.

OVC Response—OVC will outline this requirement in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 SVAA (New) solicitation and conduct an assessment of the plans submitted each year.

2. Re-evaluate the performance measures used for the SVAA program and determine whether other performance measures would provide more beneficial information to OVC about the program and the SVAA participants trained, and/or provide clearer wording of the performance measures for grantees.

OVC Response—OVC will review the performance measures to ensure that they clarify exactly what the grantees are to report on each year and provide this in the FY 2013 SVAA (New) solicitation.

3. Provide clearer guidance to grantees on the role academic partners should play in the long-term operation of an SVAA, particularly in initiating a victim course of study.

OVC Response—OVC will review the role of the academic partner in the context of the larger-scale evaluation it is contemplating for the SVAA program; however, in exploring whether an academic partner should be part of the academy, OVC wants to ensure that it does not lose sight of the long-term goal of integrating victim services curricula into post-secondary education to better equip graduates to enter the victim services field. If states are turning to the expertise of the steering committee membership for what the academic partner would otherwise provide, then more attention needs to be paid to the process of curriculum updates from year-to-year. Two specific points need attention: (1) using a trained developer to update the curriculum, and (2) using a subject matter expert(s) with knowledge in each area to consult the relevant research to update the curriculum. The current model recommends the use of an academic partner for new and developing SVAA's; however, OVC recognizes that this role may change as the SVAA matures. OVC will review the role of academic partners in SVAA's in various stages of development in an effort to identify promising practices. Any promising practices identified may be included in future SVAA solicitations.

4. Conduct further analysis to determine the optimum amount of funding for new SVAA grantees. If OVC determines that new SVAA grantees can be provided with reduced award amounts, it should consider whether the remaining funding should be used for other purposes to support the program, such as assisting established SVAA's that are struggling financially to remain open.

OVC Response - OVC recognizes that SVAA's have struggled to find alternate funding after their OVC grant funds expire and acknowledges that program sustainment is an imperative issue for SVAA's. In order to increase planning efforts for sustainment, OVC will change the funding plan in the SVAA program beginning with the FY 2013 SVAA (New) solicitation. OVC will offer a 5-year funding stream with \$35,000 in the first year and \$40,000 per year during the subsequent 4 years. OVC cleared the 5-year funding cycle with the Office of General Counsel and will begin implementing the new cycle in FY 2013.



5. Consider reinstating the cluster meetings or a cost-effective alternative that provides SVAAAs with a more interactive format.

OVC Response - OVC will not support a cluster meeting for non-grantees given the criteria now required for conference event approval. In any case, few programs get the support that OVC gives the SVAA effort. This support includes the assignment of two technical assistance consultants to support the SVAAAs in developing and implementing the curricula; operating an SVAA learning community listserv for SVAAAs to share information on best practices; and, sponsoring quarterly conference calls among the SVAA community of current, former, and interested SVAA administrators—not just past or present grantees.

6. Re-evaluate the requirement to develop entry-level training if states can demonstrate a greater need for offering victim service providers advanced or leadership training.

OVC Response - OVC is aware that the entry-level training market may be tapped out. In fact, depending on the response, FY 2013 may be the last year that the SVAA (New) solicitation is offered, at least for a few years. Support for specialized academy development in leadership or trafficking, for example, is under consideration. This appears to be an idea for a future, separate solicitation.

7. Update the goals for the SVAA program to reflect new program expectations and a strategy for the future.

OVC Response - OVC is currently conducting this process under the guidance of a new program lead and will integrate the SVAA program into its revamped approach to national-scope training and technical assistance. OVC is developing, in conjunction with its key training and technical assistance provider, a regional approach. OVC believes this approach will deliver scarce training resources in a more strategic and cost-effective way. OVC is also working with its Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC) and other partners on projects that will likely impact how SVAAAs operate, such as updating the victim assistance online training and releasing newly updated model standards for serving victims and survivors of crime.

8. Explore development of a virtual national academy that would serve as the national basic-level training for all victim service providers.

OVC Response - OVC has undertaken a complete reworking of its national academy. This rework will emphasize distance learning approaches. OVC believes that this step, along with others, will permit the more effective use of its limited training and technical assistance resources.

9. Based on availability of funding, consider identifying methods to evaluate the quality of the curriculum and instruction of SVAAAs that continue to operate after the OVC award period.



OVC Response—OVC does not have the funds necessary to undertake this type of national evaluation at this time; however, OVC has taken steps to ensure SVAAAs have the necessary resources to deliver quality training by supporting two technical assistance consultants assigned to work with the SVAA community in developing and implementing their curricula. The newly updated model standards, scheduled for release in 2013, will also inform training development.

9. Examine ways to better promote the services available through OVC TTAC, continue to offer resources to current and former SVAA grantees, and ensure that OVC TTAC offers the services that most benefit SVAAAs in their efforts to deliver quality training.

OVC Response—OVC will continue its work to improve the promotion of the services available through OVC TTAC and ensure that it offers services that most benefit SVAAAs in their efforts to deliver quality training. OVC is also working to enhance the tools and resources available online and in the SVAA learning community. The training and technical assistance resources provided through OVC TTAC are available to victim service providers generally, as well as allied organizations, and are not limited to current and former grantees.

cc: Richard Greenough
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