

**Columbus Consolidated Government
Council Meeting Agenda Item**

TO:	Mayor and Councilors
AGENDA SUBJECT:	2020-2021 Additional VOCA Grants
AGENDA SUMMARY:	Approval is requested to authorize the Solicitor General/Victim-Witness Assistance Program to submit and, if approved, accept an additional Federal VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) Grant of \$50,000 and \$16,667.00 case match or otherwise awarded from the Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. This grant would create new positions in the Office of the Solicitor General Victim-Witness Assistance Program and the salary and benefits of said positions would be fully funded pursuant to said grant. The grants would be budget neutral for the Columbus Consolidated Government.
INITIATED BY:	Solicitor General - Victim-Witness Assistance Program

Recommendation:

- (a) Approval is requested to authorize the Solicitor General/Victim-Witness Assistance Program to submit and, if approved, accept an additional Federal VAWA Grant of \$50,000 and \$16,667.00 case match or otherwise awarded from the Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.
- (b) Approval is requested to create the new positions of Domestic Violence Investigator with the salary and benefits of said position to be fully funded pursuant to said grant and said position contingent upon receipt of future grant funding in subsequent federal fiscal years; and, to be fully funded pursuant to said grant contingent upon receipt of future grant funding in subsequent federal fiscal years.
- (c) The Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to help defray expenses of the Victim Assistance Office.

Background: The Office of the Solicitor General operates a Crime Victim Assistance Program and has been awarded a Federal Victims of Crime Act Assistance Grant Program (hereinafter referred to as “VOCA”) grant for well over 25 years. We are requesting VAWA funding to provide for a much-needed additional personnel such as a Domestic Violence Investigator.

We currently have two (1) Victim Advocates position, (2) Investigator advocate positions and a Director currently. It is impossible to adequate services our victims, properly investigate as needed and prosecute the cases at its fullest without a specialized Investigator. We currently are responsible for covering 18 court sessions per week, (including State Court, Recorder’s Court, Municipal Court) and Early Notification. We provide well over 6,000 Victim Services per quarter, which tripled in the last year or so. Unfortunately, our office does not have enough personnel to cover all these court sessions, investigate each case, initiate contact with victims earlier in the criminal justice process, conduct adequate education and community outreach, and prosecute cases to the fullest.

The Solicitor General Victim Witness Program requests approval of this grant application to create a new, full time Domestic Violence Investigator using the said grant money to fund the position at a salary of \$ 39,000.00 plus benefits as follows: FICA \$2,983.50; Health \$5,265.00; GG Retirement \$1,950.00; TOTAL \$49,199.00.

Analysis: The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council has allocated **additional** VAWA Grant Funding. ***Such grants must be submitted by December 31, 2021.*** The Solicitor General's Office has been encouraged by the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia to submit applications for this additional grant money.

Projected Annual Fiscal Impact Statement: There will be no annual fiscal impact as a result of awarding this grant. The Domestic Violence Investigator position salary would be \$39,000, plus benefits, which will be fully funded by the grant. Funding in subsequent years will be contingent upon subsequent grant funding.

Legal Considerations: Georgia Law requires the Solicitor General provide extensive services, information, and notification to crime victims pursuant to O.C.G.A. Section 17-17-1 (Crime Victims' Bill of Rights). The Solicitor General is solely and directly responsible for complying with this law as mandated by the Crime Victims' Bill of Rights. The need for a Domestic Violence Investigator will greatly enhance our ability to serve our community's and prosecute misdemeanor crimes as pursuant.

Recommendations/Actions:

- (a) Approve the Solicitor General/Victim-Witness Assistance Program's submission of a Federal VAWA Grant and, if approved, accept an additional VAWA Grant of \$50,000.00 (salary of \$39,000.00 with benefits as follows: FICA \$2,983.50; GG Retirement \$1,950.00; Health \$5,265.00; TOTAL \$49,199.00) from the Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.
- (b) Domestic Violence Investigator position in the Office of the Solicitor General Victim-Witness Assistance Program, with the salary and benefits of said position to be fully funded pursuant to said grant and said position contingent upon receipt of future grant funding in subsequent federal fiscal years; and,
- (c) Approve the Solicitor General/Victim-Witness Assistance Program's submission of a Federal VAWA Grant and, if approved, accept an additional VAWA Grant of \$50,000.00 or as otherwise awarded from the Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to help defray expenses of the Victim Assistance Office.

A RESOLUTION

NO. _____

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE SOLICITOR GENERAL TO ACCEPT A VAWA GRANT AWARD OF \$50,000.00 OR AS OTHERWISE AWARDED, WITH AN IN-KIND LOCAL MATCH OF \$16,667.00 TO OPERATE THE SOLICITOR GENERAL’S VICTIM WITNESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FROM JANUARY 1, 2022, TO DECEMBER 31, 2022. AMEND THE MULTI GOVERNMENTAL FUND 0216 TO REFLECT THESE REVENUE AND EXPENSE.

WHEREAS the Solicitor-General designed a Victim Witness Assistance Program in 1997, which specially address the needs of misdemeanor crime victims; and,

WHEREAS the funds are requested to finance personnel and budget of the Solicitor-General’s Victim Witness Assistance Program to provide services mandated by Georgia Law; and,

WHEREAS the Solicitor-General Victim Witness program is requesting the acceptance of a \$66,667.00 or as otherwise awarded Federal Grant Award for salary and benefits; and,

WHEREAS, if accepted, Federal grant monies will reimburse the city for salary, and benefits for the excluding applicable Federal and State taxes.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF COLUMBUS, GEORGIA HEREBY RESOLVES.

That the City Manager is hereby authorized to accept a Grant funds for the Solicitor General’s Victim/Witness Assistance program from VAWA, a Federal grant, Amend the Multi Governmental Fund (0216) to reflect the revenue and expenses.

Introduced at a regular Meeting of Council of Columbus, Georgia, held the _____ day of _____ 2021, and adopted at said meeting by the affirmative vote of ____ members of said Council.

- Councilor Allen voting _____.
- Councilor Barnes voting _____.
- Councilor Crabb voting _____.
- Councilor Davis voting _____.
- Councilor Garrett voting _____.
- Councilor House voting _____.
- Councilor Huff voting _____.
- Councilor Thomas voting _____.
- Councilor Tucker voting _____.
- Councilor Woodson voting _____.

Sandra T. Davis, Clerk of Council

B.H. “Skip” Henderson, III, Mayor