



City Council Report

Date: November 3, 2025
To: City Council
Through: Scott Butler, City Manager
From: Jim Smith, City Attorney
Paul Hawkins, City Prosecutor
Subject: Federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Federal Grant awarded by the Arizona Department of Public Safety to Mesa in the amount of \$475,076 (Citywide)

Purpose and Recommendation

The purpose of this report is to notify the Council of a grant awarded to the City of Mesa and to request approval of a resolution authorizing its acceptance.

The requested resolution will authorize the City Manager to enter into a contract on behalf of the City with the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) to receive federal funding through the federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Victim Assistance Grant Program totaling \$475,076 over a one-year period for FY 2026. VOCA grant funds will support 40% of the total victim services program costs for the City of Mesa Prosecutor's Office Victim Services Unit. Program costs include salary and employee related expenses for 11 victim services staff (including 6 Victim Services Assistants, 1 Senior Victim Services Assistant, and 4 Victim Notification Clerks).

Approval of this award, and any amendments thereto, is recommended as the funding will allow the Victim Services Program to continue to provide vital safety services and assistance to Mesa crime victims.

Background

Since 1984, the Department of Public Safety (DPS), through the VOCA Victim Assistance Grant Program, has provided federal funding for victim services programs throughout the United States. Historically, the Victim Services Unit (VSU) at the Mesa City Prosecutor's Office has been largely funded by the VOCA grant and previously received \$510,012 in grant funding for fiscal year (FY) 2025. Due to concerns about the stability of the Crime Victims Fund balance, the grant award for FY 2026 is 7% lower than last year's award. Additionally, our program costs have risen significantly over the past few years due to

inflation and increases in staff salaries. Consequently, fiscal year 2026 VOCA grant funding will cover approximately 40% of total program costs.

Discussion

The Mesa Prosecutor's Office is responsible for prosecuting all misdemeanor crimes and city code violations within the city limits. Our Victim Services Unit (VSU) provides essential educational, advocacy, safety and community support services to tens of thousands of crime victims every year.

When a Mesa resident is victimized, most are unaware they have victims' rights and know very little about the criminal justice system or court procedures. Many victims have never been in a courtroom or a prosecutor's office, nor have they dealt with any type of criminal matter. Navigating the justice system can be confusing, disorienting and discouraging. Without the guidance, advocacy, and support offered by Victim Services, some crime victims in Mesa may never fully exercise their victims' rights or participate in the justice system in a meaningful way.

In FY 2025, we served 14,952 victims, consistent with the service totals from the previous year. As the City of Mesa continues to grow, we anticipate the number of victims in need of services will grow with it. The funds provided by this grant will help the Victim Services Unit continue to provide critical services to victims, supporting them through the criminal justice process, ensuring they have full knowledge of and access to their Victims' Rights, and assisting them in attaining full restoration after victimization by addressing safety, healing, and economic needs.

Alternatives

The alternative to approving acceptance of the VOCA grant award funding is to deny it. Such action would require the Prosecutor's Office to request the City provide additional funding from the City's general fund to support the VSU, or it would require our office to drastically decrease VSU staff, nearly eliminating all advocacy and safety services for crime victims in our community. Approving the grant would maintain the current levels of staffing, ensuring that crime victims in Mesa continue to receive needed services in a timely manner.

Fiscal Impact

There is no change to the fiscal impact to the City in accepting the VOCA grant award funding. All required matching funds are covered by existing positions currently funded by the City of Mesa, state grants, and in-kind services. It is always a concern, particularly where staff positions are involved, whether grant funding will be maintained by the funding source. The Mesa Prosecutor's Office VSU has received funding for victim services positions consistently for over 20 years.

Coordinated With

Our Victim Services Program staff work collaboratively across departments within the City of Mesa to ensure victims have access to quality resources and services and to provide continuity of services from the moment a crime has occurred through case disposition and beyond. We work closely with the Mesa Police Department, Mesa Family Advocacy Center, and Mesa Municipal Court to serve ongoing victim needs and address safety and accountability issues within the community.