Dear OVW Award Recipient:

As you know, on Tuesday, October 1, 2013 funding for federal government operations lapsed. As a result of this lapse many federal agencies have ceased operations. However, consistent with the Department of Justice (DOJ) Contingency Plan (http://www.justice.gov/jmd/publications/doj-contingency-plan.pdf), a determination has been made that the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) has sufficient resources to remain operational until further notice. If OVW’s status changes, we will notify you as soon as possible. As a result of our continued operations, OVW remains available to assist grantees, stakeholders, and the public on a limited basis during this period; however, our ability to meet grantee needs will be affected by the impact the lapse has on other DOJ components and federal agencies.

Based on questions we have received from many of you, we are providing the following information, in question and answer format, regarding the availability of OVW and the systems and services we use to support you.

Sincerely,

Bea Hanson

Continuation of Grantee Activities under Existing Grants

QUESTION: Will I be able to continue activities and projects already funded under my existing OVW grants or cooperative agreements during a period of a funding lapse?

RESPONSE: Yes. Grantee activities and projects already funded under existing grants will generally be able to continue to the extent the grantee has funding available (see question #4 below regarding requests for payments). The exception to this guidance would be if federal employee involvement is critical to the project being carried out or proceeding to the next step. For example, under a cooperative agreement, there may be actions that a federal employee has to take for the project to continue; that is, the project has arrived at a decision point that requires federal government approval or other determination in order for the project to proceed to the next step. If your project requires federal staff involvement, please consult with your OVW program specialist before proceeding.

QUESTION: Will I be able to request a no-cost extension of my project if the lapse in federal funding forces our project to cease operations?

RESPONSE: Yes. If the lapse in federal funding forces you to cease operating your OVW-funded project or to delay certain project activities, you will be able to extend your project. Please contact your OVW program specialist before shutting down your project or delaying project activities or deliverables so that we can make a record of your decision.
QUESTION: Will grantee-sponsored events (such as conferences, meetings, and trainings) scheduled during the period of a funding lapse be affected?

RESPONSE: Most approved grantee-sponsored events (e.g., conferences, meetings, trainings) scheduled during a funding lapse generally will not be affected and can proceed as planned. However, if federal employee participation, including participation by OVW staff, in these meetings or trainings is critical in order for these events to proceed, the event cannot be held even if previously approved. This could include federal employee involvement to carry out the event or provide oversight or guidance. During the lapse in government funding, OVW staff are only available on a limited basis and may not travel or attend outside meetings. If you have an upcoming conference, meeting, or training that involves federal participation, please consult with your OVW program specialist before proceeding. Additionally, given that the Grant Payment Request System (GPRS) will not be available until an appropriation is passed (see question #4 below), cooperative agreement recipients with approved conferences or conferences pending OVW approval should contact their OVW program specialist if they believe it prudent to reschedule their event.

QUESTION: Will I be able to request payments and draw down funds during a period of a funding lapse?

RESPONSE: No. The Grant Payment Request System (GPRS) is no longer available to users until appropriations are enacted and Office of Justice Programs (OJP) staff returns to work.

Due to a lapse in appropriations for Fiscal Year 2014, OJP, which handles the grant payment system (GPRS) and Grants Management System (GMS) ceased operations at 5:00 p.m. EDT on Friday, October 4, 2013. OVW staff, however, will continue to work their normal schedule until further notice.

OJP processed payment requests received as of 9:00 a.m. EDT October 4, 2013, and OJP expects grantees will receive these payments. However, OJP and OVW will not be able to verify or resolve any potential problems that may have arisen during the processing of the payments until after appropriations are enacted and federal staff returns to work. Requests made after 9:00 a.m. EDT on October 4, 2013 will be processed once the government is reopened. These systems ceased to be available at 5:00 p.m. EDT October 4, 2013.

QUESTION: Will I be able to reimburse my organization or agency from my OVW grant for allowable grant activities once GPRS comes back on-line?

RESPONSE: Yes. All allowable and approved grant activities are eligible for reimbursement once the federal government reopens and GPRS comes back on-line.

If you have approved activities under your OVW grant that you can temporarily support with other funds, you will be able to draw down funds from your OVW award to reimburse your organization once the government reopens and GPRS is back on line. We can illustrate this with
two hypothetical scenarios. An organization with a Legal Assistance for Victims (LAV) grant is approved for a full time civil attorney on their OVW award. In scenario one, the organization has private funding that it can use to pay the attorney during the federal government’s lapse in funding. Once the government reopens and GPRS comes back on-line, the organization can draw down funds from its LAV award to reimburse itself for the attorney’s salary during the funding lapse. In scenario two, the organization does not have another funding source to support the attorney’s compensation during the federal government’s funding lapse, and the attorney continues to work without pay. Once the government reopens and GPRS comes back on-line, the organization can draw down funds to “retroactively” pay the attorney his or her outstanding salary. It is imperative that all grantees continue to maintain appropriate employee timesheets that reflect work on grant-funded activities throughout this lapse to document the need for reimbursement when the funding lapse ends.

**Grants Management System (GMS) and Grant Administration Activities**

**QUESTION:** Will the Grants Management System (GMS) and the GMS Help Desk be available during a period of a funding lapse?

**RESPONSE:** No. The Grants Management System (GMS) is no longer available to users until appropriations are enacted and OJP staff returns to work. Users will not have access to apply for funds, submit progress and Federal Financial Reports (FFRs), request grant adjustment notices, submit closeout actions, or respond to on-site financial monitoring issues for resolution. Likewise, the GMS Help Desk will not be available to users. Grantees whose funds are currently frozen due to overdue reports or other reasons will remain in this status.

**QUESTION:** Will OVW’s Grants Financial Management staff and my Program Specialist be available to answer questions or provide assistance during a period of a funding lapse?

**RESPONSE:** Yes. OVW staff, including the Grants Financial Management Analysts and Program Specialists, will be available during the period of the funding lapse until further notice. To the greatest extent possible, OVW staff is prepared to review and approve via email grant adjustments that are normally submitted through GMS.

**QUESTION:** Will requests for grant modifications be addressed during this lapse in federal funding?

**RESPONSE:** Yes. OVW staff is prepared, as much as possible, to continue to assist you with your grant needs during this time. Because GMS is no longer available, all requests must be processed by email. Grantees are advised to retain copies of email approvals in their own grant files. OVW staff will also retain copies. When the federal government returns to normal operating status and GMS is brought back on-line, any requests approved via email must be uploaded into GMS for record keeping purposes. Your OVW Program Specialist may contact you with questions regarding GANs that were pending in GMS. Additionally, OVW’s Grants Financial Management Division (GFMD) will continue to review budgets from our FY 2013
awards. GFMD staff may reach out to you with questions about your pending budget. OVW staff will do all we can to ensure that your projects can proceed as planned.

QUESTION: Will I be able to submit Federal Financial Reports (FFRs) or progress reports to the GMS system?

RESPONSE: No. GMS is not available to accept Federal Financial Reports (FFRs) or progress reports during a period of a funding lapse. Please note: to provide adequate time to grantees to prepare and submit their Federal Financial Reports (FFR) due on October 30, 2013 for the period July 1–September 30, the deadline will be extended by the number of days GMS is not available due to the funding lapse.

QUESTION: Will the System for Award Management (SAM) remain operational during a period of a funding lapse?

RESPONSE: According to GSA, the System for Award Management (SAM) will remain operational during a lapse of appropriations. Users will be able to submit new registrations and updates to existing registrations. Users will be able to search for entity registration records and exclusion records on the SAM.gov web site. Please check the Federal Service Desk at www.fsd.gov or the SAM.gov home page for any changes to SAM’s operating status. OVW currently does not have any open solicitations.

QUESTION: Will an OVW programmatic or financial on-site monitoring visit scheduled during the period of a funding lapse still occur?

RESPONSE: No. All on-site monitoring visits scheduled during the period of a funding lapse will be postponed or cancelled. If your OVW Program Specialist has not yet contacted you, they will do so shortly. If an OCFO financial monitor has not yet contacted you to reschedule the monitoring visit, expect them to do so once the government is reopened. However, your OVW Program Specialist may contact you to set up an “Office-Based Review” of your award during this time.

Recovery Act Recipient Reporting

QUESTION: As a Recovery Act funding recipient, will I be required to report to FederalReporting.gov during the current recipient period of October 1 -14, 2013?

RESPONSE: Yes. FederalReporting.gov and their Help Desk are not impacted by a lapse in funding and will remain open and fully operational during the October Reporting Cycle and Continuous QA. Please note that beginning with the October reporting cycle, the Help Desk is no longer receiving live calls and users must email the Help Desk to request assistance. The Help Desk email address is FederalReportingHelpDesk@ratb.gov.

Applying for OVW Open Solicitations
QUESTION: Will I be able to submit funding applications for open solicitations/funding opportunities through the Grants Management System (GMS) or Grants.gov during a period of a funding lapse?

RESPONSE: No. The GMS will not be available to accept funding applications. While Grants.gov may be available, OVW does not have any open solicitations at this time.

OVW-Sponsored Websites

QUESTION: If we operate a non-.GOV website (e.g., .org) with full or partial grant funding from OVW, are any special actions required?

RESPONSE: No.

Questions about this Guidance

QUESTION: If I have a question relating to this guidance or the impact of a funding lapse on my grants, whom can I contact to assist me?

RESPONSE: Until further notice, OVW employees will be available to assist you. We would also like to learn about any direct impact that the funding lapse has had on your program or the survivors you serve. Please contact your OVW Program Specialist with this information. You can find their contact information in your award document, or they can be reached by calling the OVW main number at 202-307-6026. We realize the inconvenience and disruption this lapse in funding may cause in many local communities around the country, and we appreciate your understanding and patience.