

July 15, 2020, Crafting Narratives Webinar Transcript

Slide 1. Introduction:

Thank you Daniel and good afternoon and welcome. My name is Ginger Baran and I manage the research evaluation and performance portfolio at the Office on Violence Against Women at the U.S. Department of Justice. Joining me today is my helper, my eight-year-old daughter Harper. Harper, can you say hi to everyone.

Hi.

I asked Harper to help me kick things off today because I'm working from home and, like many, juggling family responsibilities at the same time. Over the past few months we have received many questions and concerns from grantees about if they will be penalized in some way because the nature of their work has changed during these unprecedented times and they have had to veer from the original course they charted in their grant application in order to serve victims, safeguard their communities from violence and keep their staff safe and well at the same time. While OVW's responsibilities as your funder and your responsibilities as a recipient have not fundamentally changed, I cannot have emphasize enough that we at OVW know you are doing the best you can, under the circumstances. We all are. We all have to be flexible and adaptable to get through this pandemic and the upheaval it has brought. Later I am going to address the questions that some folks submitted in advance of this webinar. But I wanted to start things off by letting you know that we understand that these are trying times.

Slide 2. Missions (Minutes 1:25):

Moving along, I'm going to describe the missions of our separate but collegial organizations here and also before I get started, I want to thank my fantastic colleagues at the Measuring Effectiveness Initiative at the Muskie School for Public Service at the University of Southern Maine. Devon Grayson-Wallace from the MEI Initiative is joining us today. She and her colleagues, including Julia Bergeron-Smith, have done some great work convening this webinar and I am forever grateful for our ongoing partnership and all the support they provide to grantees and to OVW to make sure we have good and valuable and useful data on the wonderful work that you, our grantees are doing.

I also want to thank Daniel and the National Council of Juvenile Family Court Judges for providing this forum and helping us make today's webinar possible. And last but certainly not least, I also want to thank all of you for taking the time to participate today. I know you have very busy schedules and progress reports are maybe not always front of mind and we appreciate that you are taking the time to be on this webinar and learn how you can make the most out of the narrative space you have to tell us about your work. There will be time for questions at the end but if we miss your questions you can reach out to me or anyone from the team at MEI.

About OVW. Over the past two decades our office has administered nearly nine billion dollars in grants to programs authorized by the Violence Against Women Act or VAWA. While much of our work is focused on grant making, we also provide leadership within the Justice Department and through our partnerships with other federal agencies on combatting domestic violence, dating violence, sexual

assault, and stalking. The mission of our office is to provide that federal leadership and to help communities in their efforts to reduce these crimes and ensure justice.

We administer 19 grant programs and we also deploy training and technical assistance to help grantees align their work with the best-known approaches out there and make the greatest possible impact with their federal funds. Additionally in the process of fulfilling our reporting mandates and answering data requests we have the opportunity to shine a light on the important and life-saving work that you all are doing in your communities to help victims and to hold offenders accountable. If you're one of those grantees that uses your grant report to highlight all of this success you have accomplished and all of the challenges you are facing and you wondered if the time you put into documenting all of that is a waste, I hope you will come away from today's webinar feeling certain that it's not a waste and I hope you will get some affirmation it's worth your while to provide those rich and detailed accounts of how OVW grant funds look in action. Devon, do you want to talk a little bit about your work?

Absolutely, thank you very much Ginger. Happy to be here today. As Ginger said, my name is Devon Grayson-Wallace and I am a member on the team called the Violence Against Women Act Measuring Effectiveness Initiative, which we call VAWA MEI, located at the Muskie School at the University of Southern Maine up here in the state of Maine. We are often referred to simply as Muskie by grantees and OVW. So if you have ever heard, oh call Muskie, they will know how to help. That is the team I work on. We are a partner to OVW grantees and OVW. We are here to help demystify and decipher the progress reports you, if you are a Discretionary grantee, are required to complete twice a year. We think of our job as being the experts on how to fill out these long, intricate forms so that you do not have to be. And we are here to support you to complete those as accurately as possible so you can help OVW really understand what's happening on the ground in terms of these four crimes all across the country. We also support OVW in helping to get that information out to the public and decision-makers and key stakeholders in the form of regularly produced products and reports.

Slide 3. Today's Training Agenda (Minutes 6:15):

Our primary goals for today include giving you a better sense of how OVW is using the data you report, and we will detail how OVW reviews, analyzes, and then reports out your data and how that data informs decisions made within and beyond OVW.

Another goal for today's webinar is to give grantees tips about how to write really strong narratives that capture how you are using VAWA funds and the impact of your work in your community. We will go to real-life examples of how you can use qualitative or narrative sections of your report to offer a view from the field on what is working to uplift your voices and to shine the light on the important work you are doing. Telling us your stories, helps OVW accurately portray efforts across the country to end domestic and sexual violence. Whether you have been a grantee for multiple cycles or you are a new grantee, each time we do one of these trainings we pull new examples from recent progress reports from your colleagues. So I hope you'll find it useful and something you can refer back to as you complete your report. For the poll question, I'll hand it back to Devon.

Slide 4. Your Turn... (Minutes 7:25):

Thank you very much, Ginger.

Before we move forward and get going, we would really love to hear from you about who is in the room and I see many have been answering that question in the chat box already. But we do have a poll here asking if you have attended a prior training hosted by OVW and MEI on using narrative data. I see we have responses coming in. The other thing I would like to say before we get going while everyone is responding to this poll, is that we really love to have this training be as interactive as possible.

Throughout it, we will be sharing information with you during the first half of the training and then we are going to turn it over to you for what we hope to be a robust and lively conversation and question-and-answer where we will share some quotes with you, examples of narrative data and talk together and by that I mean, you'll be invited to use the chat box to share your thoughts as well on the examples that we will be going over. We encourage you not to hold back during this webinar and we look forward to having as much of a back-and-forth as we can in this webinar today.

I see we have about a 60-35 split between people who, 60% of people say this will be their first OVW/VAWA training and about 35% of people participating say they have participated before. Welcome everyone and welcome back to those who have listened to these narrative data webinars in the past.

Slide 5. Why Does Data Matter (Minutes 9:40):

Why does data matter? I myself am a research analyst. We at VAWA MEI like to take any opportunity we can to nerd out about data. We will share a quote with you today. This is a quote from Chip and Dan Heath who are brothers who work in academia and in social entrepreneurship and they co-authored four best-selling books including "Switch, How to Change Things When Change is Hard." The quote we would like to share is "Data are just summaries of thousands of stories –tell a few of those stories to help make the data meaningful" That right there is the gist of everything we are trying to get at with today's webinar, how to help you make your data as meaningful as possible by way of rich and compelling narrative.

To give a sense of how your data matters to OVW and how OVW uses it, I will turn the slides back over to Ginger.

Slide 6. How Does OVW Use Grantee Data (Minutes 10:50):

Thank you, Devon. When I first started working with the Measuring Effectiveness Initiative a few years ago, something they shared with me and made clear to me was we need to communicate more back to our grantees about the many different ways we use the data you give us. They had said that some grantees have shared that they feel like they spend all their time filling out progress reports and that it just goes into a black hole. That couldn't be further from the truth. I hope that, in today's discussion you will come to see that black hole is not much of a black hole and is more like a carefully curated and frequently raided data pantry.

With that in mind, I want to talk about some of various ways in which we use grantee data at OVW. One way is from monitoring. At OVW, we have a responsibility to track our grantees' progress in compliance both financially and programmatically. We are not in any way out to get you and by and large most problems or issues that come to our attention in progress reports are things that can really be easily cleared up, which give us a chance to connect a grantee with technical assistance that can help them get their work to where it needs to be.

For instance if we see a grant report that says very few activities took place, maybe just a couple of meetings, and then we see the grantee has drawn down \$50,000 during the corresponding six month period, it would prompt your program specialist to check in and see what's going on. Maybe take a look closer and look at financials. Maybe it was just a clerical error or maybe there's a perfectly reasonable explanation for that disconnect or, in some cases, maybe there's a bigger problem that we have to take a closer look at. It could be a number of things but the progress report gives us a chance to check in on small problems before they become bigger issues.

On the programmatic side, say you are funded to do law enforcement activities and your program specialist sees that you are reporting a significant number of dual arrests in domestic violence incidences. It might prompt them to ask questions about what's behind that and see if there are training needs or other issues that we could help address by connecting the grantee with technical assistance and training.

Another reason is to fulfill our reporting requirements. Congress provides the funding for VAWA program every year and they do expect a report back on how those grant funds are used and that is written into our statute. So Reports to Congress include aggregate numbers for many of the quantitative areas you report on, like the numbers of victims served. We also highlight plenty of the narrative information that grantees put in their reports. These snippets help tell the story behind the numbers and they give texture to the impact of the grant dollars. If you haven't taken a look at a Report to Congress before, please check it out on OVW's website, the most recent report was posted some time last week, or MEI's website. You might even find your own organization among the feature grantees.

We also use grant data to identify trends and promising practices and unmet needs. We can spot really groundbreaking and innovative work in grantees reports and use that to highlight examples of the ways grantees are shaping responses to sexual and domestic violence that fit their communities unique needs. We also use things that grantees tell us about areas of unmet need to justify our requests for increased appropriations, when that is an option for us, and to develop demonstration initiatives which are basically special projects where we pilot test some kind of innovative approach to a particular issue.

For instance we often hear that the lack of legal services is a major barrier for domestic violence victims. And we hear this across grant programs and from grantees throughout the country they report this in that area of remaining needs section of the progress report. This helps inform requests we've made for increased appropriation for our Legal Assistance for Victims programs. It also helped us understand the need to have legal services be a permissible use of funds for programs, which prior to the 2013 Reauthorization of VAWA, those programs could not use funds for that. So your reports about what VAWA needs are do inform, at times, what we are able to do and the ways that we are able to support you.

We also use your data for performance measurement. We have to report certain metrics to Department of Justice leadership that are used to track our office's progress in achieving its mission and goals. Finally for data request. We get tremendous support from Devon and her colleagues to answer questions from within and outside government, from Congress, from the press, and many other places. One example would be that a few years ago we turned over, to the Government Accountability Office, progress report data showing the extent to which grant funds are used to staff sexual assault nurse examiner programs and provide training for SANE nurses. This information was used by GAO in a report that they released on the challenges to hiring, training, and retaining SANE nurses. I am sure many of you are in communities where this is a challenge and it is difficult to get medical forensic needs met for sexual assault victims because they have to travel far. So that report actually led to Congress to make additional funding available to bolster SANE programs. We have also shared narrative information from tribal grantees about how they've used their OVW funds to provide culturally specific services to victims that may find strength and healing in additional approaches besides some of the mainstream approaches we know about. That's a quick overview of the various ways that we use grant data.

Slide 7. Data Provides Answers to Questions... (Minutes 16:35):

The next slide, these are just a few of the questions we have used grantee data to answer: What our grantees doing to address sex trafficking in their communities? How many law-enforcement officers are funded through OVW grants? How many grantees are using funds to support family justice centers? As well as a storytelling you provide in the narrative answers to eliminate the issues we are asked about and explain what is our grantees are doing to address those issues.

SO now I am going to hand it back to Devon.

Slide 8. As You Write, Consider Context (Minutes 17:15):

Thank you very much, Ginger. Now that Ginger has described how OVW uses grantee data for monitoring, reports to Congress, performance measurement, and ongoing data requests, I will be talking about how you can make this narrative data that OVW uses for all these different purposes more compelling and robust.

To start with, when we go to fill out our own progress reporting form because we at VAWA MEI are ourselves a technical assistance grantee, the first thing we start thinking about is the context. What do these numbers you are reporting in your progress report actually mean? I do have a sample quote that does a really nice job walking through and illustrating context and I will read the next slide and tell you what makes it a strong quote and in a few slides I will give you the opportunity to weigh in.

Slide 9. As You Write, Consider Context (Minutes 18:30):

“The intentional relationship building and shared training opportunities, required as part of the LAV program, have truly resulted in enhanced collaborations between our partner agencies. We work well together and respond to the needs of each individual client. Our coordination provides a strong safety net and wrap-around approach. Our strong collaboration allows people to access services through multiple doors. For example, one individual may feel more comfortable calling an attorney directly and so may contact the Law Project before advocacy services, whereas another individual may work with advocacy services before feeling comfortable meeting with an attorney. These relationships have resulted in increased collaboration and opportunities to work together beyond the provision of civil legal services.”

This is a really nice quote talking about this LAV grantee’s coordinated community response work, their training work, because it is clear, concrete, and concise. This speaks to how this LAV funding enabled this grantee to create a network of support. Not necessarily that this grantee wasn't doing the coordinated community response or training work before or they couldn't be doing it without the funding. They might well have. But they are pointing out how they were able to use this funding to specifically enhance their work - working more closely together, building those relationships and really creating a more robust system wide response for grantees.

Slide 10. As You Write, Consider Impact (Minutes 20:30):

Now that Devon has talked about considering context as you write narrative, I would like to address how you can consider impact. How does your work impact your community? For example, how are you influencing change? What activities are doing that you see is making a difference and what does that difference look like?

Slide 11. As You Write, Consider Impact #1 (Minutes 20:55):

I'm going to read a quote from a grantee I think does a great job of conveying impact.

“This funding has allowed us to establish a presence in the community. Prior to receiving this funding, we had a very limited staff, all living and working in Sevier County. We responded to four other counties in our coverage area using volunteers and staff during the day. Attendance at meetings and interaction with victims was very limited due to such a small staff and having to travel long distances. We now have outreach offices open in three other counties. We have hired advocates in each of these counties who live locally and are able to be more in touch with community needs... Simply having the ability to continually educate these communities on available resources and services will improve the number of victims who are aware of and will access services.”

So this quote gives you a before and after look at the situation in these counties, shows clear cause and effect, and conveys information that the numbers cannot capture.

Slide 12. As You Write, Consider Impact #2 (Minutes 22:00):

This is our first opportunity for each of you to weigh in on what makes an example quote a strong narrative. I am going to read this quote and invite you to use the chat box to write in and name what stands out to you about why this is a compelling narrative and how it speaks to the impact of grant funding.

“First and foremost, State Coalitions Program (SCP) funding supports our efforts to create and maintain quality victim services in Nebraska. The Domestic Violence Program Coordinator, whose position is supported entirely by SCP funds, conducts regular peer reviews of all network programs to ensure that they are operating in accordance with state program standards. Peer reviews are time-intensive, involving coordination of a peer review team, in-depth review of program policies, program site visits, and the creation and distribution of written recommendations. In addition, the peer review site visit often involves travel and an overnight stay. SCP funding supports this process, allowing the Coalition to monitor programs and ensure that victims are receiving the best services possible.”

I see in the chat that we have some folks writing in. Alexander names it speaks of the growth of the organization how it has been able to accurately channel the funds. Yes, that's great. Thank you!

Tara writes, this is task oriented but lacking a meeting piece as well as quantitative numbers. That's a good point. Is possible that this narrative would be further enhanced by some hard numbers about time involved with the number of peer reviews the state coalition program coordinator does on a regular basis.

Valerie write, quality control. Janna writes, details the service, what it does and who is involved. Exactly, this work could not have been done without the funds. It speaks to the impact in this community because it is work that would otherwise not have been done.

Slide 13. Impact: Outputs vs. Outcomes (Minutes 24:40):

Thank you for that participation everyone. Now I am going to take this opportunity to talk about two different, related but distinct data concepts which is outputs versus outcomes. This is one of those concepts that at first thought may seem simple and straightforward but it can be hard to define and even harder to drill down in your writing and in your thinking to make sure that you're finding a way to include the outcome of grant funded work and not only touch upon the output.

So, when you think about this distinction, it's your opportunity to talk about the impact your work had on your community. Many different progress reports and grant proposals will want you to talk about specific outputs you are reporting and what outcomes you want to see. We like to think of it this way. Outputs are how many or how much while outcomes are the changes you observe in your field. You can make the connection between your activities and outcomes you see to show how you are using VAWA funding to help create long-term, large-scale benefits. So the outcomes are the benefits of those outputs. The larger picture of what it was you want to see in the population of survivors you are serving.

Slide 14. Impact: Outputs vs. Outcomes #1 (Minutes 26:20):

Here is an example of outputs versus outcomes from the Underserved grant. If an Underserved grantee reported on their progress reporting form 2.5 FTE or full time equivalent, 10 victim served, and 925 people changed. These are the concrete, quantitative numbers that will go into the hard data field on the progress supporting form. It's in the narrative that this grantee was really able to convey to their program specialist and to decision-makers what the outcome of the work was. They wrote,

"This funding has allowed us to hire two FTE positions to focus on the issue of LGBTQ sexual violence. It has allowed both agencies in this partnership to exchange expertise, skills, and referrals that would have never happened if not for this formalized partnership. WOAR - Philadelphia Against Sexual Violence now has all of their staff trained in LGBTQ-affirming care... this funding has enabled Mazzoni Center to train all of their staff on how to receive disclosures of sexual violence, proper reporting methods, and bystander intervention for sexual harassment. Together our agencies have formed a strong alliance that we can model for other providers when advocating for the care of LGBTQ victims and survivors of sexual violence."

This quote really conveys what hard numbers would never have been able to do. Which is how VAWA funding directly enabled this grantee to support additional staff to reach previously completely unreached communities. It speaks to the broader change in the community because, not only is it talking about the direct impact the funding had on their organization, but the ways working together with other organizations in their community has provided a model for how the whole community can advocate for the care of LGBTQ victims and serve them better.

Slide 15. Impact: Outputs vs. Outcomes #2 (Minutes 28:50):

Here's another good example of a grantee using narrative to walk us from the numeric output to tangible outcomes. This is a Tribal Governments grantee and they reported they were funding one law enforcement officer position, 19 incident reports are investigated or taken and 32 cases were investigated. This is what they shared with us in the narrative.

"This funding opportunity has allowed us to build a dedicated team of professionals who work together on a daily basis to achieve a common goal of protecting victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and strangulation. This team consists of an investigator, a prosecutor, and a victim advocate. In addition, we have built a strong working relationship with our federal partner, which did not previously exist. The Investigator and the FBI agent have worked many cases in conjunction with one another and this has led to what we believe is an increase in reporting, especially with respect to sexual assault cases. The FBI is on the reservation every week working cases with the Investigator, sometimes multiple times a week. In addition, over the next two months we will be working in conjunction with Women Spirit Coalition on implementation of our standard operating procedures for law enforcement to use when responding to crimes involving intimate partner abuse and sexual assault."

I see we have a lot coming up in the chat box and I would love folks to weigh in and tell us what makes this narrative salient? Advocacy and intersectionality, Gabriella shared, collaboration and action. Highlighting what funding has enabled within the community paints a visual picture of what happens, that's great, those numbers we got might be helpful to add to an aggregate but without that story, the

numbers don't bear as much meaning. Specificity. Right! We get a lot of specific information in that narrative. Oh and this is a great point - relationship development equals results, that is so critical, Maria. As you know, all of our different grant programs at OVW do different things, they have different goals and objectives and audiences and communities that they work on behalf of. But the one piece of thread that ties them altogether is the idea of a coordinated community response and that when victim services and the justice system and others in the community work together to streamline their response to victims, everyone is better than merely the sum of their parts. So thank you for pointing that out.

We have to demonstrate the collaborative response, say Dawn. Exactly. Raising awareness and collaborating with law enforcement. Connecting the outputs with the outcomes. This is great everyone. This is fantastic. I'm going to read off what Diane shared before we move on.

Are outcomes only directed to the community? As an LAV grant, the majority of our work is directed towards helping individual clients meet their unique and individual goals through legal representation. Which does an outcome look like in that work? How many orders have we obtained? What else could be an outcome? So I think what an outcome could be will look different from program to program depending on the nature of the legal services you are providing and what organizational and project goals are. And some of the ideas you listed as outcomes are what some programs use. I will tell you as well that many, while making sure they're not sharing identifiable confidential information and broad strokes, many LAV grantees tell us about clients who have had complex legal issues and the way they have helped worked holistically with that client to resolve a number of issues stemming from their victimization. There are numeric measures and there are other things that maybe cannot be quantified that can be conveyed. I am going to hand it back to Devon.

Slide 16. As You Write, Ask Yourself... (Minutes 33:15):

Here are specific prompts to help you when you do sit down to fill out your progress report and craft a compelling narrative. Some of the things that we like to ask ourselves as we go through are: am I being specific and detailed? As many of you have pointed out in the chat box, some of the most important aspects of the example quotes we have shared are those very specific details about what was done with the funding, what happened, and the impact of the change made in the community.

The next question you can ask yourself, am I providing concrete examples? Whether those are anecdotal or a description of how the program is working, being as concrete as possible in those examples that you give about the work you are doing really helps flesh out what is being done with the funding in way the quantitative data itself cannot describe. Another question to ask yourself, am I providing evidence to support my conclusion? Making grandiose claims about the impact and transformative nature of the work you're doing will not be quite as valuable as if you can offer evidence through anecdotes or through, in this other examples to ask yourself the before-and-after, if you can talk about what was going on in your community or challenges being faced by victims or by your program in carrying out your activities before the funding and talk about the way you are more easily able to serve victims or your community is working together in a new and stronger capacity after the funding. Those types of examples are really going to back up your claims about why your project is being successful and what good this funding is doing in your community. The best is if you can find a way to work in anecdotes and numbers. In any event, asked these questions as you go through.

And then another lens to take here is to focus on your working relationships. As you saw in some of the quotes we just read that highlighted the nature of those relationships and the way they have grown and deepened in order to better serve survivors over the course of carrying out a grant. So you can ask yourself, did I create or build new working relationships? Did I break down barriers in my communities between our organization and other organizations? Has does my work impact victims or how did my work hold offenders accountable per the goals of the programs and your particular program?

Slide 17. Provide Concrete Examples (Minutes 36:30):

Here is an example of a quote that uses some of these different lenses of concrete examples. I'll read this quote aloud and invite you all to weigh in on what makes this a strong narrative.

“Much of Tulare County is rural and has limited access to community resources. Grant funding has given older adults access to free, confidential services close to home, education about elder abuse, as well as information on how to protect themselves from becoming victims of abuse. The Abuse in Later Life Victim Advocate spends much of her time in small rural towns within our county and has office hours at several senior centers. In addition to hosting discussions on specific topics, she invites other agencies in the community to join her and assist her in bringing resources to the area. These discussions are held in both English and Spanish in an effort to engage populations that may otherwise feel unable to participate in the discussion.”

So I see folks writing in. Sarah pointed out that the story helps connect program outputs and outcomes. Oh, that might be able a different quote. Hah. Sarah writes, the quote highlights specific strategies for providing access in resource desserts. Another Sarah writes, that grant funding gives them access to resources. Courtney writes, this example highlights how different funds are used to support a vulnerable population. Maria points out, detailed examples of how the funding is addresses identified needs: language access, culturally appropriate services. Exactly! This quote provides concrete examples of how use of funds enabled the grantee to connect with impacted communities and it responds to ongoing needs that would otherwise not been met.

I will now turn it back over to Ginger to walk through a couple more examples.

Slide 18. Evidence to Support Your Conclusions (Minutes 39:15):

Thanks Devon. I am going to read this next example which is a grantee offering evidence to support conclusions. This came from an Improving Criminal Justice Response grantee.

“The staffing of an on-site Court Clerk at A Safe Place Family Justice Center (ASP-FJC) has been a game changer when it comes to closing critical gaps in our video court program. The clerk is able to communicate directly with her peers and judges to minimize anything that would affect a victim's due process and access in the court system. Before having the court clerk on-site through this project, the victim's protection order often would not go through as a result of the lack of staff knowledge of the process and technical items, such as a missed petitioner signature or other flaws in the paperwork. We now have a 96% granted rate on our protection orders filed on-site at the ASP-FJC video-court program. Prior to this grant-funded Court Clerk position, we ranged from 88%-92% of orders granted on-site.”

What you'll notice with this one is that the grantee described an outcome and provided evidence in the form of the rate at which protection orders are granted to support the notion that what this grantee is doing is yielding gains. If you are like me, I have spent a lot of time in the research realm, you might be saying to yourself, correlation does not equal causation and certainly that's fair but when we talk about outcomes, we are trying to achieve something and trying to identify evidence that what we are doing is working and inform if we need to go back and reconfigure what it is we are doing. So this is certainly good evidence that this grantees approach is yielding positive gains.

Slide 20. When Narrative Data Misses the Mark (Minutes 41:00):

And now we have gone over a number of examples of very strong quotes of narrative data. Here are some times when the narrative data might not be as useful or might even raise some flags. The first is when a grandiose claim of effectiveness is lacking any evidence to back it up. Not very useful or illuminating to simply state your program is highly effective or making a great change in the community without getting specific and concrete and providing those examples - whether it's anecdotes or before-and-after descriptions - that really, as the saying goes, are showing rather than telling about the effectiveness of your program.

Another is if the narrative states what was already reported but does not further detail the efforts of the grant. So for example, if you're just restating some numbers that are in the quantitative questions on the form, like these provide services to 70 victims without expanding on the nature of the services or how providing the services has brought change in your community, that's not as valuable as it could've been. That space could have been used to elaborate further and put more context and concrete evidence into the narrative.

Finally, writing about activities that are not supported by the OVW grant or were not allowable with OVW program funds. If there is narrative describing activities that are not supported with funding or not allowable, it is not very useful but it also is the type of thing that can cause a grant to be held up or raise internal flags and we don't want that to happen. So, be sure to stick to the scope of the work you're funded to do with your grant on your form narrative.

Slide 21. If You're Just Getting Started (Minutes 43:20):

Thanks Devon. So a question we often get from new grantees is what should they put in the progress report when there is not a whole lot going on in terms of serving victims and putting plans into place because they are more in that planning process. So if you are just getting started and wondering what to write about, some good things to think about are what are the gaps in your community that this grant is going to help you fill? Perhaps you already described and talked about those things in your grant application but please remember, this is the data we come through to figure out how to improve our programming and technical assistance and also to report back to Congress and other stakeholders. So we do not share what you share with us in your grant application so it's important to convey that in your progress report and tell us about what you're aiming to do.

Your project planning efforts, under some programs you actually don't have access to your full grant budget balance until you've gone through some sort of a structure planning phase and met certain requirements stipulated by OVW. Either way, we want to hear about your planning process no matter if you're reporting zero for victims served at that point while you are getting all the pieces into place to be successful.

Tells about existing resources and tools in your committee that you will leverage under the grant. Make sure you talk and stay focused and, you will see this in the instructions in the form, that what you put in your report needs to be tied to the dollars. Focus on telling us about what the OVW grant is financing but still bear mind that we know that none of this is happening in a vacuum and so you can provide context and explain where this OVW funded work fits in the community. That can be incredibly helpful and powerful.

Slide 22. What Information to Prioritize (Minutes 45:05):

Most of the time folks come to us saying they don't know what to write but once in a while we get some grantees asking us for help because they have so much to write, they don't have enough space and they want to know what to do. If this is ever the situation you find yourself in, and you're trying to figure out how to prioritize, we have two suggestions. First, focus on the numbers that require more explanation, so for things that cannot be conveyed with the numbers on the form and anything that is not captured elsewhere on the form. So we know there is a lot of work that might not be able to be captured in numeric form at all. So that is the type of a qualitative information to focus on if you find yourself unsure about what to include in your narrative because you have so much you want to say. Think about what cannot be conveyed by numbers alone and any numbers that might be illustrate your challenges and accomplishments but which don't exist in fields anywhere on the form. We are always happy to walk you through that with a phone call and through technical assistance if it is useful.

Slide 23. OVW Data Request (Minutes 46:30):

In a few moments we'll get to the preloaded questions as well as your off-the-cuff questions and we will definitely make sure we have ample time for that. Before we do that, I want to put in a plug for a request that we have at OVW. We're looking at our training and technical assistance portfolio and trying to get a handle on what our grantees are finding most useful and what needs they have that maybe aren't being met through our current TA and what can be improved. So we want to hear honest and candid assessments about the trainings you have attended in a one-on-one TA that you have received. Tell us what has been helpful in what you have taken home and immediately implemented in the daily course of your work and maybe also tells about what you haven't found as valuable. That will help us think about where we want to go with our technical assistance work going forward. Use your narrative fields at the end of the form to tell us any reflections you have on technical assistance. We would greatly appreciate that.

Slide 24. COVID-19 Reporting Guidance for Narrative Questions (Minutes 47:30):

Now we are going to address some of the questions that have come up which many are kind of revolving around what's going on right now with the pandemic. I addressed this some when we got started but I want to reiterate that we recognize that a pandemic presents tremendous challenges and we anticipate those challenges are going to be reflected in progress reports.

I strongly encourage you as you need to make changes, whether that's to the work you are doing, to your staffing, to the scope of your project and even the goals, please be in touch with your OVW Program Specialist. Sometimes those changes are just a quick phone call conversation or email to resolve and sometimes we need to formalize it through some paperwork and GMS and discuss what those changes are. We are here to support you. We know we all have to be flexible and you're all doing the best you can to serve your community so just communicate to us so we can make sure that we give you what you need and have a good record of changes that are underway.

Also use your progress report to convey those changes. To do that, we recommend grantees use words like "COVID-19" or "pandemic" when describing adjustments you have made to your programming and also when you have incomplete or missing data. We know with folks working remotely that there can be challenges about getting the data that you need for your reports. We understand that is a reality right now. By noting those barriers and those challenges in your progress report, you're enabling your program specialists to review that and connect with you and make sure everybody is on the same page.

Also, in your grant's goals and objectives section, describe the impact the pandemic has had on your progress towards project specific goals and your grant activities. You can describe any no-cost extensions or programmatic changes you have employed that have been approved by your program specialists and the various ways that you are navigating and being innovative around these challenges. It is helpful for us to know what the difficulties are in the field.

Slide 23. COVID-19 Reporting Guidance for Narrative Questions Continued (Min 49:45):

An important thing I want to note, any other data issues like that missing data or incomplete data, use a progress report to just explain the situation. I recommend grantees do not report estimates and instead use the narrative to describe activities that you're not able to quantify or report right now. Keep in mind the numbers you report in your progress report can be subject to audit. So you only want to report numbers you have source documentation for, like call logs, timesheets or aggregates from your data management system to back up and if you cannot get that data right now because of everything going on, just explained that in your progress report.

Slide 24. COVID-19 Resources (Minutes 50:35):

Here are some resources from MEI and OVW that you may find helpful. We have held some "office hours" sessions to answer these questions as they come up. You can find a recording and a transcript at the link on this side.

Slide 27. Key Narrative Questions (Minutes 50:55):

I will quickly breeze through where in your progress report you can find these narrative questions. If you're really new to these forms, you may not even know where to be looking. Most of the questions are at the very end of the report. There is a grant goals and objectives question we talked about. And the remaining areas of need and what you want us to know about the effectiveness of your grant that you may not be able to convey elsewhere.

So with that I will turn now to questions you submitted with your registration. Some I think we have addressed throughout this webinar, but there are some we may not have hit upon. So I will go to that quickly and get to your questions. I want to say if there's anything we don't answer today or get to or something comes to mind once we are offline, you have my contact information and Devon's contact information, reach out any time, we are happy to help you.

One question said client contact is down. Zoom and telephone contacts are up. Discussions on the phone and help lines are up. How do we document all these changes, especially when direct contact isn't made?

My advice would be to report things like victim advocacy provided, safety planning, crisis intervention, as you normally would in your progress report but just notes somewhere in the narrative that you shifted to virtual platforms for much of this. You might have been providing advocacy in person before, and are now doing it on a virtual platform. Just note that in the narrative but continue to count it as the service it is in the sections you have to do that. For things that cannot be captured in the provided field, something that doesn't fit quite into the list of services you provide, use that other option and fill in your own text to describe it and count it.

How specific should advocates get with narrative and what kind of information is considered unnecessary for these narrative fields? I would say, tell us what you think we ought to know about how you use the funds and how the project is going and if you have concerns about the level of detail, there's no penalty for being overly detailed. If you have questions about that, do reach out your program specialist.

Another question was is it possible to consider using OVW funds as incentives to boost online participation in virtual events that are now online and needing to move to that platform? This came from a Campus Program grantee. The answer to that is most likely no. Stipends are generally allowable to offset somebody's time dedicated to a task but incentives are unallowable for most OVW programs except for our research and evaluation initiatives.

Another question, there are grantee who work with law enforcement but they're working with courts to bring about more prosecutions, how should these data be refunded in the narrative? This is a great example of something that if you don't feel like those numeric feels about cases like referred from police and prosecutors and accepted for prosecution are adequate to capture the work that you're doing, by all means, use the narrative to convey what that work is and what it looks like and what you are achieving.

Another person asked about wanting to learn more about being new to a grant program doing the work and also doing it in these unprecedented circumstances and basically that he wanted to compare notes with other grantees in the program. That's a great question. I would encourage you to connect with the technical assistance provider that works on your specific program whether that's the campus program

or the LAV program or whatever program it is. You can definitely contact your program specialist and inquire who the TA provider is and if there are these sort of periodic calls to share notes and exchange ideas. Some programs are convening these calls so everyone can talk about what they are seeing what they're doing and maybe bounce ideas off each other and do some professional development.

How to calculate FTE and this is a perennially challenging issue for grantees and for us. But fortunately the team at MEI has created a handy FTE calculator that you can download off their website. It's super easy and will probably resolve your questions about calculating FTEs so I encourage you to look for that on the website and let us know if you cannot find it.

One other question was about how not a whole lot has been able to be accomplished during this time things have been shut down and folks are in quarantine. Certain goals that were set for period you're about to report on have not been met and things have been changed. I would encourage you to describe reality as it is and your efforts to work within that reality. There was also a question about whether they should describe plans for the future. Really keep your progress report limited to the previous six months and talking about that. If you have concerns, definitely communicate with your program specialist. I think I covered most of the questions that came in before now would like to open it up to questions in the chat.

Danielle asked for a link to the FTE calculator. We can definitely get that out. I think Julia is on, do you think you can drop that link in, let's give her some time to pull that up.

I'll keep an eye on the chat box. I'm not seeing more questions come in right now but I want to wait a few minutes before we close anything out in case there are questions that come to mind.

Slide 33. Thank You! (Minutes 57:30)

While we are waiting on questions, I'll bring up the slide that has our contact information. Please always feel free and do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you have. We are here to support you. Reach out any time.

Don says, let's say we held a training event during this March but were unable to secure the attendee numbers in time for the progress report, therefore we described the event in the narrative but did not estimate numbers.

Don, that is exactly what to do. If you don't have the source documentation to support your training numbers, report the training event under training events, describe it in the narrative, and you can even put estimates in the narrative. But understanding that you do not have the record to support that at this time. That is the exact way to report it.

Jill is asking, when will this recording be viewable? Jill, it will be going up on the VAWA MEI website vawamei.org sometime early next week. In the meantime, there is a version of this recording from last summer that is already on our website so I'll post a link to that. This one with these current questions and this guidance will be up shortly. We will send an email to all attendees when that recording is up letting you know it's up and directing you to that recording.

Genie, we love nerdy questions so thank you for this. You noted the OMB clearance number on a progress report is expired. Typically we do update the actual OMB record. Believe it or not, trying to upload those forms is expensive and time-consuming so often you will see an outdated number on that form even though for all intents and purposes is updated so just ignore the expiration date as you continue.

Dawn asks, if you get the numbers in August should you report those in the next semiannual? Here's what I would recommend. There's multiple ways you can go this. When you get those numbers, email VAWA MEI at vawamei@maine.edu and email your programs specialist to say here are the numbers. The folks at VAWA MEI keep the final record so they can drop your numbers in there. You can also ask, if your progress report has not been approved, ask your Program Specialist to change-request it back to you so you can make the update so either of those options is acceptable.

Donna asks, can you give examples of goals and objectives of someone in the collaborative building phase? For some programs were there is a very structured and specific planning phase, definitely tie your activities to whatever is written into your grant award and the terms and conditions of the award and any other guidance you received from OVW specific to your program. If there isn't so much of that structure in place and you are just putting some planning pieces in, describe what meetings you had, getting MOUs if that was necessary and just laying the groundwork for a successful project by building those relationships are building off relationships that exist. Anything concrete is good but also just the work of getting everything together is important to document.

Gabriela asked if the transgression will be available. Yes a transcription will also be available with the recording. I'm going to, say I said that information out.

Karen said that she wasn't able to have a sensitivity training in the workplace, I was asked for information on domestic violence and I has sent the information out. Do I report this? I'm not quite sure where that might go depending on what program you're working under. It may be something you want to notes in the narrative section of your progress report but it may not rise to the level of something you need to report unless it's an ongoing activity and collaborative efforts you're doing with a partner.

Lilia says, I have been doing our reports for the last four years. There's a question about what the funding has allowed us to do that we were not able to do in the past. Is a terribly wrong to provide the same example in each report? The examples I have provided were around having a dedicated staff for transitional housing, building relationships with our current MOU partners, increased number of services for clients, etc. Lilia this is such a great question. Thank you for asking. There is no penalty and I would even encourage you that when those examples remain relevant and salient and current, please continue to include them. A part of the reason is when we start looking back at narrative data, we sometimes only pull the most current six months and scan that. We don't necessarily look back years and years to find information and trends that we need. Reporting these things as long as they remain true and current is fantastic and I strongly encourage you to do it.

Donna says, prior to the first collaboration meeting there was a lot of research on my part to learn about the grant and the company I am working for. Do I include this in my report? I would say yes you can, you don't have to. There's no real black and white include this in your report, don't include that in your report. You can report it and as long as it was funded through the grant, it's fair game to include.

These are fantastic questions and I really appreciate everyone asking. So it looks like a few more folks are typing. Morgan asks, we include quotes that survivors provide to us in feedback surveys. We do not include names, but is this something that is helpful or desired?

Always victim confidentiality and privacy supersedes absolute everything else. So if there is a salient quote you feel comfortable sharing and, you obviously don't want someone saying I live at XYZ address and this is what I think, and of course you would leave that out. But if they share about services and what it's meant to them or recommendations for improving services is just not going to be identifiable back to somebody is certainly fair game to include in your report.

I'm going to continue to answer questions as they come in but I know that you all, your time is very valuable and you spent an hour of it with us. So I'm going to continue to address the questions that come up in the chat box but I want to say, in case folks has to drop off, that I appreciate your time joining us today and your attention to capturing all the good work you're doing in your progress report. I know you're busy and this is just one other thing to do. I appreciate your focus on that and sharing back with us what impact you are seeing of your OVW funded work in your community. Thank you for everything you do for your communities to keep them safe and please reach out if you have questions.

Anyone can feel free to drop off the line now, I'm going to stay on a few more minutes in case additional questions come in.

Now I'm seeing lots of thank yous. Thank you all as well. I think we are ready to close out. Take care everybody. Goodbye.

Thank you everyone!