July 22, 2021 Crafting Narratives: Telling the Stories Behind Your Data Webinar Transcript

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Slide 1: Crafting Narratives: Telling the Stories Behind Your Data (Minute 00:00)

Hi, everyone. Thank you so much for that introduction, Elle, and thank you to Elle at TA2TA for hosting today's webinar. Good afternoon to everyone out here in Eastern time with me, and good morning to all y'all further west. Welcome to today's webinar, Crafting Narratives-- Telling the Story Behind Your Data. My name is Devon Grayson-Wallace, and I am here today with my colleague, Erika Arthur. We are both members of the VAWA Measuring Effectiveness Initiative, which is a TA provider who helps you learn about and complete your OVW Progress Reporting forms. Thank you also, in addition to TA2TA, to the captioners and interpreters that are here, helping us present to everyone today.

Before I give you a little more detail about our role, Erika and I, and the goals for today's training, I wanted to orient you a little bit more to this webinar platform and how we are hoping to use it. You will see that there is a chat pod on the side of your screen and separately, a Q&A pod. This chat pod is being used to share resources with you, such as links to captioning and links to our website, vawamei.org. We are also going to use the chat pod throughout the webinar to ask you to weigh in on what-- we're hoping to make it a little bit more interactive than many of our other webinars. There is also a Q&A feature to ask all of your questions. We will hold off on many of the questions until the end of the presentation, and, at that point in time, aim to answer your questions verbally for all to hear. However, if you have a question that's a little less general, perhaps specific to your grant and your activities, we will likely respond to it within the Q&A pod during the presentation.

You all are here with us today because your semi-annual progress report is almost due. Today is July 22, and because progress reports are due 30 days after the close of the previous reporting period, your January to June 2021 report is due on July 30, next week. So very glad you are all here with us today, and hopefully, we can help you to fill out your progress reporting form and meet that federal requirement for your grant.

Slide 2: Missions (Minute 02:40)

All right, thanks Devon. And I will make one more quick announcement before we dive into the missions of OVW and VAWA MEI. I want to let any culturally specific services program, or CSSP grantees, out there know that the July virtual office hours this month are on the topic of No Cost Extensions. You're a comprehensive TA provider. Casa de Esperanza wanted us to let you know that. If you have any questions about that, you can go to them. But again, that topic for those office hours is No Cost Extensions this month.

So before we dive into the content of our webinar today, we wanted to give you a little bit more of a sense of the mission of both OVW and our mission, VAWA MEI. We're separate organizations, but we cooperate. We're friendly. So OVW's mission-- well, let's start by saying that, over the past decade, OVW has administered nearly $9 billion in grants to programs authorized by the Violence Against Women Act or VAWA. While much of their work is focused on grant-making, they also provide leadership within the Justice Department and through partnerships with other federal agencies on combating domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. OVW's main mission is to provide that federal leadership and to help communities in their efforts to reduce these crimes and ensure justice.

So OVW does this by administering 19 grant programs. They also deploy training and technical assistance to help grantees align their work with the best known approaches that are out there and make the greatest possible impact with the federal funds that they're granted. Additionally, in the process of fulfilling the reporting mandates and answering data requests, OVW has the opportunity to shine a light on important work, the important work that you all are doing in your communities to help victims, and to hold offenders accountable. So if you are one of the grantees that uses your grant report to highlight all of these successes you've accomplished and all of the challenges you face, and you're wondering if the time that you've put into documenting all of these things has been a waste, I hope that today you'll come away from this webinar feeling like that's not the case. That all the work that you've put into documenting is actually going toward a very important effort that OVW is working

toward and channeling what you report to people who can make decisions. Devon, do you want to talk about VAWA MEI?

Sure. Thank you, Erika. So Erika and I work as part of VAWA MEI, at what people often think of as Muskie, or the Muskie School, at the University of Southern Maine, up north in the state of Maine. We are a partner to OVW grantees and OVW themselves. We are here to help demystify and decipher the progress reports that you, if you are discretionary grantee, are required to complete twice a year, so that you can fulfill those as accurately as possible. They help OVW really understand what's happening on the ground, in terms of the four crimes-- domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We also support OVW helping to get that information, all of the wonderful information grantees submit, out to the public and decision makers and key stakeholders in the form of a variety of different reports and products over the year.

Slide 3: Today's Training Agenda (Minute 07:20)

Great, thanks Devon. So just go over our agenda for the day-- our primary goal today, as we've mentioned, is to give you a better sense of how OVW uses the data that you report, how they review it and analyze it, and we'll also go into how your narrative can help convey-- using specific details, using before and after effects-- how you can convey what the work that you're doing is. So that decisions can be made, based on what you report, whether that's the remaining areas of need in your communities or emerging practices that you see should be elevated. So whether you've been a guarantee for multiple cycles, or if you're new, each time we do one of these trainings, we pull new examples from recent reports. So if you've been here before, we hope that, even though some of the information might be familiar, that you'll glean some new insights as to how to most effectively convey the accomplishments that you have made with your funding.

Slide 4: Why Does Data Matter? (Minute 08:45)

Devon, do you want to bring us into these quotes?

Yeah, thanks, Erika. So as a data researcher myself, I would be missing an opportunity here if I didn't take a moment to share some data-related quotes with you. The first here is a quote from Chip and Dan Heath, who are brothers working in academia and social entrepreneurship. Together, they have co-authored four bestselling books, including Switch-- How to Change Things When Change Is Hard, in case that's anything you've ever heard of or might want to explore. It reads, "Data are just summaries of thousands of stories. Tell a few of those stories to help make the data meaningful." Another quote I want to share with you all is from Brene Brown, who some of you have probably heard of but maybe don't immediately associate with data. But technically, she is a researcher, as well. She says, "Maybe stories are just data with a soul."

Slide 5: How Does OVW use Grantee Data? (Minute 10:05)

Thanks, Devon. So with that in mind, we'll move into some of the ways that OVW uses grantee data. So we started offering this webinar a few years ago, in collaboration with OVW, because we kept hearing that grantees felt like they spent so much time doling out progress reports, and it feels like it just goes into a black hole. But that actually is very far from the truth. And again, I hope that you won't be feeling like you're sending your data into a black hole anymore after this webinar. Because we're hoping to let you know a few of the ways that it is actually used and it is actually making a difference.

So one way that your data is used, including the narrative, is for monitoring. OVW has the responsibility to track grantee's progress to be in compliance, both financially and programmatically. They're in no way out to get you, and by and large, most problems or issues that come to their attention in your progress reports are things that can really be easily cleared up or that give OVW a chance to connect the grantee with technical assistance that can actually help get work to where it needs to be. So for instance, if OVW sees a grant report that says very few activities took place, maybe just a couple of meetings, but then sees that the grantee has drawn down $50,000 during the course of the six-month period, it would prompt your program specialist to check in and see what's

going on. Maybe take a closer look and maybe it was just a clerical error or there's a perfectly reasonable explanation for that discrepancy. So it's any number of things that they can find and hopefully connect grantees with the support that you need.

On the other side of things, if you're funded to do law enforcement activities, and your program specialist sees that you're reporting a significant number of dual arrests in domestic violence, in domestic violence incidences, it might prompt them to ask questions about what's behind that, see if there's any training needs, or other issues that they might help address by connecting the grantee to TA, to training and technical assistance. So those are a couple of ways. OVW is also required by statute to report to Congress. And VAWA MEI helps with that by compiling those reports to Congress, which include numbers, aggregate numbers, for many of the quantitative areas that you report on, like totals the victim served, et cetera. They also highlight narrative, which as Devon mentioned, is really the heart of the data. These quotes tell the story behind the numbers, and they give kind of texture to the impact of the grant dollars.

And if you haven't checked out those reports to Congress, they're a great way to see exactly how grantee narrative is used. There are tons of quotes in there. You can see what other grantees in your grant programs or other OVW grant programs are doing. You might even find your own organization featured in one of our reports. OVW also uses data, grantee data, to identify trends and promising practices, and also to highlight unmet needs. So there's the question on the reporting form that asks you to report your remaining areas of need. Those are analyzed closely by us and compiled so that we can identify trends and places where we're hearing the same thing over and over again, both within programs and across programs. They can also highlight the innovative work that you all are doing, even sometimes things that aren't yet funded can be pulled out of those questions and taken note of.

Moving on, OVW also uses your progress reports for performance measurement. They have to report certain metrics to the Department of Justice leadership that are used to track the office's overall progress in achieving its goals. Finally, VAWA MEI uses the data that you report on your progress report to answer questions that OVW has that are kind of ad hoc. Throughout the year, they may get requests from the Government Accountability Office, or from Congress. Certain members of Congress might ask for certain pieces of data or testimonials, and we can do searches and pull that information out of your reports and send that along to OVW so that they can respond quickly to those requests that they're getting. So moving along.

Slide 6: Data Provides Answers to Questions (Minute 16:15)

Thanks, Erika. So our next slide has a variety of different types of questions that OVW has literally used your grant data to answer within the last couple of years. For example, what is the impact of change to the LAV program on types of services provided and volume of services? We, at VAWA MEI, took grantee data-- in this case, specifically, from the LAV program-- and compiled it, in order to help OVW answer this question when it was put to them. How many grantees are using funds to support family justice centers? This was a particularly easy one for us to answer, fortunately. And we pulled together information from a variety of discretionary grant programs and formula grant sub-grantees to answer this question.

What are grantees doing to address sex trafficking in their communities? We relied very heavily on narrative to help answer this question. Because, as you all know, there are not existing questions about sex trafficking in the quantitative data sections of the progress reporting forms. We can turn over numbers, and we often do, but a lot of times, it is the narrative itself and the storytelling that grantees share in the narrative that helps OVW understand and frame the problem and explain what solutions are out there that seem to be showing promise. The narrative really answers questions that the quantitative data can't, as well as providing additional context and perspective to the questions that quantitative data does speak to.

Slide 7: As You Write, Consider Context (Minute 18:10)

So Erika has talked a little bit about how OVW uses grantee data for monitoring, the reports to Congress, performance measurement, and ongoing data requests, like those questions that I just shared. Now that you know how the data is being used to support VAWA funding, provide rationale for new purpose areas, answer questions, focus policy, and help decision makers focus on important updates and needs coming from the field, let's talk about how you can make it as compelling and robust as possible to fulfill all these different needs. One question that we encourage you to ask yourself when you sit down to write up the narrative for your progress report is-- what do these numbers mean? How do you tell the story behind the numbers? What are these numbers grounded on in the field? What do they mean for the impact that you can have with grant funding and what you can do with it? What's the context? I have a few sample quotes that do a nice job of walking through or illustrating context. So what I'll do next is read the next slide and tell you what makes it a strong quote.

Slide 8: As You Write, Consider Context (Continued) (Minute 19:25)

And then in a few slides, we'll read some quotes, and I will give you the opportunity to weigh in about what makes them a strong quote. So this is a quote from the CY, or Consolidated Youth, program.

"CYP funds have allowed us to provide our community with cutting-edge, evidence-based therapies in a supportive and client-centered environment. Clients often comment on how Community Violence Intervention Center--" that's the grantee who submitted this narrative-- "therapists are different because they quote 'just get it.' They understand trauma and they meet clients where they are. Without current funding, we would not be able to sustain our initiatives in the school system addressing gender-based violence. Through CYP, we are able to continue collaboration with school personnel and cultivate new relationships with educators, coaches, and administrative staff. This school year, we were able to pilot and implement Athletes As Leaders within Grand Forks County, reaching a population of student athletes that we have not reached in the past. With CYP staff support, this program had a great first year, which has opened doors to new relationships that have been built within the sports community. Without funding, we would not see the positive changes and shifts in cultural norms regarding gender-based violence."

So to tell you a little bit about what makes this such a strong quote-- it's clear. It's direct. It describes concrete ways that funding has helped the community that this grantee is located in. It speaks directly to the impact that the program funding has had, and it also really helps to convey the larger context of the quantitative data submitted alongside this report. In the numbers that are submitted, you would never be able to convey to OVW and decision makers exactly how much has changed within the community, and what the larger situation in that community is that the funding has been able to help this grantee address and really make a change. So I'll pass it back to Erika for another question.

Slide 9: As You Write, Consider Impact (Minute 21:50)

Yeah, similarly, we would ask you to consider, how does your work impact your communities? So thinking about the impact of those numbers that you reported in the quantitative section and filling those out with stories. So this next quote illustrates impact, and we'll move ahead to that next slide.

Slide 10: As You Write, Consider Impact Example 1 (Minute 22:20)

And this is a grantee in the rural program. And this says, "Prior to receiving this funding, we had experienced some significant cuts, including to staff. We no longer had a Sexual Assault Response Team advocate, who also ran the local SART meeting. We did not have the staffing capacity to focus on the Advocate Initiated Response, or AIR protocol, or on how to improve our relationships with local law enforcement. The hiring of the Coordinated Community Response Coordinator has helped us improve our relationships with the legal system in our county, to update protocols and to help refresh and retrain officers. This funding has also increased our bilingual advocate to one full-time equivalent, which is significant because we serve a fairly large Spanish-speaking population, and that

advocate was at her capacity. This advocate has a positive relationship with the community and is trusted. By increasing her hours, she can serve more survivors than she could prior to this grant."

So again, this is a really powerful quote. It gives you a sense of what it was like before this funding was on the scene. It shows a clear cause and effect that we got this funding and here is how it impacted our community right away and strongly. It also is very specific in its narration of the specific population or segment of the community that it is impacting. So this has a lot of elements of a very strong quote.

Slide 11: As You Write, Consider Impact Example 2 (Minute 24:40)

We have another quote that illustrates this kind of impact, as well. Devon, do you want to run us through that?

Yeah, thanks, Erika. Let's see-- so this quote is from a different program. It's from the SASP-CS program, which is the Sexual Assault Services Program-- Culturally Specific. "Receiving SASP-CS funding has allowed Sakhi to expand its understanding of what gender-based violence entails in the South Asian context and within our communities. Over the last 29 years of Sakhi's existence, we hadn't had the opportunity to address such a critical need as sexual assault in the communities that we serve. Missing in our capacity and services was a dedicated staff member who was trained in the complexities of sexual violence, and broaching the highly stigmatized and taboo subjects with clients who had experienced such violence over the years. SASP-CS funding has not only allowed Sakhi to engage sensitively with clients who reported experiencing sexual violence, but it has also allowed Sakhi to engage with all of its clients in more open discussion around healthy sexual relationships, body integrity, consent, and the trauma that results from the violation of these important rights. With this funding, we continue to be able to introduce new and holistic initiatives and adjust the way we do our work. Ultimately, SASP-CS funding has provided a perfect opportunity to learn new ways to integrate sexual violence work into Sakhi's already robust domestic violence work and practice, allowing us to provide a more holistic approach to our work with survivors."

Now that's a lot, but I'm going to ask all of you to weigh in on what makes this a strong narrative. And for this, we invite you to use the chat pod. So type into the chat pod-- it can be bullet points or full sentences, whatever you're comfortable with-- about what makes this quote right here a strong narrative quote. You can consider things like how does it speak to the context, how does your work-- how does it talk about the impact this work has in their communities? I see people are responding. I'm going to read responses aloud.

"It stated what was missing." "This quote addressed how they helped community immediately." "It's a then and now a story about the funding." "It's clear." "It explains their expansion's meeting needs." "It explains what they received and how it has impacted the work they have been able to provide clients." "Examples of what the funding has provided." "Specific information about the grant's ability to address underserved populations in the community." "It ties the funding to specific activities." "It provides context about how sexual assault specifically impacts our communities, culturally speaking" "Describes the specific community impacted." Yeah, all of these are exactly it. Great, everyone. "It states with specificity how the funding has led to specific changes." Exactly. "It talks about how the work would not have happened without the grant and critical needs would not be met." Exactly. Thanks, everyone. Seems clear to me that you're getting it. Wonderful.

Slide 12: Impact: Outputs vs. Outcomes (Minute 28:20)

OK, I'm going to move us on. Yes, thank you. Wait, never mind. Sorry, I'm getting ahead of myself.

So outputs versus outcomes. Data nerd that I am, I want to try to walk everyone through a little bit of basic data understanding at this point in today's conversation. This idea of outputs versus outcomes can be really tricky, sometimes, for people who aren't as literally steeped in data every day as we are to wrap their minds around because it seems so simple, which in itself makes it a little more complicated. So when you're thinking about outputs versus outcomes, and you're sitting down to try to focus on outcomes in your narrative, this is a place where you have an opportunity to talk about the impact your work has.

Many different progress reports and grant proposals are going to want you to talk about what specific outputs you are going to be reporting. Things like how many victims were served, how many professionals were trained-- those are outputs. What outcomes you want to see. I think of it this way-- outputs are how many or how much, and outcomes are the changes you are observing in your field, or what you want to observe in your field if you're just starting out your work.

This outputs versus outcomes is really where you can make the connection between your activities and the outcomes you're seeing to show how you are using VAWA funding to help create long-term, large-scale, sustainable benefits. It's a difference of discrete and concrete with that bigger picture and the change work that we all know is so valuable and is not always captured in the hard numbers in the reports.

Slide 13: Impact: Outputs vs. Outcomes Example 1 (Minute 30:15)

I'm going to read another quote and share the specific outputs. So this is from the ICJR, or Improving Criminal Justice Response, grant program. On their progress report, this grantee reported two FTEs, or two staff positions funded, and 136 victims served. Those are the outputs. They're concrete, they're discrete, they're limited. They're important, but they are only one piece of the picture. The quote speaks to the outcomes.

"One of the greatest positive impacts that ICJR funding has provided is to have a full-time, dedicated, confidential community-based advocate. She is bilingual, bicultural, and able to provide comprehensive services to victims and survivors as they walk in our office. In this last reporting period, our organization shifted the client flow, which reduced the number of clients being routed to our advocate. However, the highest risk clients, including those with the highest danger score on the Jackie Campbell Assessment, were routed to our specialized advocate. She was able to provide more intensive services to clients than before. She was able to attend more court hearings, expand her reach to the Yelm Municipal Court-- a rural area of our community-- support people longer term, as well as support the staff in our other programs when they needed a bit of guidance and expertise. We found that, though her caseload decreased, her impact was more substantial than before."

So the reason that this-- the reasons that this is such a strong quote are many. And many of them are what everyone named about that other quote. It tells the before and after story. It speaks to the larger impact in the community. It talks about how the funding had an impact, even beyond the one advocate who was being funded with the grant, because she helped support and influence the work of the other staff. It speaks with very specific details. It focuses on the exact underserved community that they were able to better reach as a result of this funding. It hits all of those great points that you all named. It's clear examples. It's detailed, and it really tells much more of the story than those two FTEs and 136 victims served could possibly tell without that narrative to talk about the long-term impact and the broader community results, the output, of this funding.

Slide 14: As You Write, Ask Yourself (Minute 33:05)

Thanks, Devon. Yeah, so as you're able to see more and more with these examples, you really bulked up the numbers they provide in the quantitative sections of this form with the responses you provide in the narrative field. And I could say, as someone who has spent probably at this point hundreds of hours reading narrative from you all, it's powerful. So in a cumulative sense, I feel so inspired by the work that's happening out there. Far more inspired than I would were I just to read the numbers, though those are impressive as well. The stories behind them really convey the power of this funding on impacting communities.

So as you're writing, you can ask yourself these questions to make sure that you're hitting the mark with your narrative. So am I being specific and detailed? Am I providing concrete examples? So making broad, big claims about what the funding has done is not as powerful as if you provide specific examples and evidence to support those kinds of claims. And then again, that before and after lens it's really powerful. Before, our community looked like this. Now, it looks like this. Really, really powerful.

Slide 15: Provide Concrete Examples (Minute 34:50)

So concrete examples, again, we'll give you another example here, and then ask you to weigh in on what makes this an impactful segment of text. So this is from the Tribal Coalitions Program.

"Little by little, the Southwest Indigenous Women's Coalition is making an impact. We may be small, but we are mighty. Without funding, we could not travel to tribal communities to visit and learn firsthand about their training and technical assistance needs or to experience the challenges of their communities, whether it be rural roads, inconsistent internet, lack of support, remote office locations, distances between program services, law enforcement, or the hospital clinic. These learned nuances are what makes up the backbone of our ability to tailor our services to meet the needs of tribal communities, our membership. Without funding, we cannot attend meetings across the state or nationally to provide input that is missing regarding violence against Native women and/or the LGBTQ two-spirit community. We could not provide regional trainings that offer a viable and meaningful method for tribal community advocates, law enforcement health, care workers and educators to improve their knowledge, skills, and awareness of topics related to domestic and sexual violence." So again, that's a lot, but we'd love to hear from you in the chat about what makes this a strong narrative. So feel free to drop your ideas in the chat there.

Exactly. The way they tailor their program to serve their community. This really illustrates the power of the different programs that OVW has shaped for responding to the specific needs of specific communities. What else? The whole host of missing services are discussed as being available now. Exactly. Specific issues. Yeah, what they can do now that they couldn't have done before. Yeah, again, the specific community. Very concrete. Exactly. So yeah, you're seeing-- you're seeing some patterns now.

Slide 16: Evidence to Support Your Conclusions (Minute 37:50)

All right, I'm going to pause really quickly to go back to a question that came in a moment ago.

There was someone asking about if they had not received their full budget yet and that impacted their ability to do what they had said they would do, if that was an appropriate thing to write about in the narrative. And I'm glad that someone asked that question because that's actually another great use for the narrative questions. Is if anything is unusual is going on, whether that's because of not receiving your budget, or because of something that's more specific to your program. That's definitely something that you can narrate in these narrative questions. This is the place where you get to provide that context, whether it's about what you are able to do, or what you weren't able to do, due to some unforeseen circumstances. So thanks for that question, Monica. So moving on. Devon?

Thanks for the question, Monica. Thank you for responding to it, Erika. I just want to say that it very suddenly started straight up storming here where I live. It was sunny and warm in a couple of moments ago. So if I very suddenly drop off, I'll be back on as quickly as I can. But I have faith that Erika will carry on without me. I just wanted to acknowledge that in case I disappear. I'll be back. So here is a-- thank you, Erika. Here is another example we want to share with you. And the focus of this example here is evidence to support your conclusions, which is something that can be really critical and helpful to focus on when you sit down to write a narrative.

This grant is from the campus program. The most significant-- excuse me, I meant to say this quote is from the campus program. "The most significant impact of this grant funding is having a full-time project coordinator on campus to do prevention programming and keep track of other programs happening on campus. In crime prevention logs from the previous school year, we had a total of 13 programs listed between various departments on campus. During the 2017-2018 school year, there were a total of 75 programs documented on the crime prevention program log. These programs and opportunities to request trainings are now more widely known on campus, due to in-person conversations and the development of a violence prevention web page under Student

Life. The web page shares resources and victim services, and highlights current initiatives happening on campus. The web page continues to develop as we continue with the grant and learn more about our needs on campus."

So I will invite you all, again, to use the chat box. What jumps out to you about this quote? What stands out? What's your immediate take away? What makes it good or strong, more robust? Why did we choose to share with you today? Also, never mind, I see responses coming in now. Someone shared, before and after. Yeah. "A specific description of what's on the new web page." "Details." "The increase in prevention and safety programs is large and relevant." Exactly. "This grantee tied an increase in prevention and safety programs not only back to the funding, but also back to the other pieces of work that they were able to do with the funding." "Being able to see other people take examples of them having conversations, which feels like such a small piece, but does have an impact." "Quantitative change and measurable differences." Exactly. "The increase in the number of programs stands out. It's an outcome that is backed by actual data." Thank you, everyone, for participating. Erika, did you want to speak to a question before we move to the next example?

Yeah, actually, I can answer this question that came in. I was going to save it for Devon, but certainly makes sense just to pop it in now. Thanks, Karen, for your question. Asking about the perspective-- the voice used in the quotations. Kind of being taught in professional writing not to use first person, I-language, but to use professional titles and that makes a lot of sense. And is probably a good idea, if you do say I, I would say-- it would be helpful to say your position title, but I don't necessarily think that it's prohibited or not recommended, necessarily, to ever use first person. But to give as much context and specificity again, even in terms of position. So if you just say I, don't assume that I'm going to look back and see who you are on the first page. Or whoever reading it is going to have that information right in front of them. I would say, in the narrative, you could try to maintain that kind of specific context, as well. Kind of just assuming that sometimes this could get pulled out of the context of the whole report. So that, that would be helpful. Karen, let us know if that doesn't answer your question, or if anyone else has any follow-up questions about that. Happy to answer them.

Slide 17: Before and After (Minute 44:10)

All right, so we have one more example here for you all to weigh in on, and then we'll move into a couple of other things before we wrap up. Sorry, of course I get a little frog in my throat in the middle of this. So we'll do one that looks at this before and after piece. "The Sexual Assault Legal Institute would not exist if not for LAV funding. The organization was formed and developed using LAV funding, and remains one of the few legal service providers in the country devoted exclusively to serving survivors of sexual assault. Prior to the formation of SALI, many sexual assault survivors, particularly those who had experienced a non-domestic sexual assault, had no access to legal assistance and were not provided with information about their legal options outside of the criminal justice system. Thanks to LAV funding, SALI attorneys now provide a comprehensive and holistic legal information, advice, and representation to survivors that is necessary for access to the entire justice system. LAV funding has allowed SALI to pair survivors with experienced low bono attorneys who are sensitive to the needs of sexual assault survivors and willing to provide legal assistance. The funding that SALI receives through the LAV grant has improved access to legal services for sexual assault survivors throughout the state of Maryland."

All right. We kind of gave you some hints here, but what do you think makes this a strong narrative? Feel free to drop them in the chat box. "Improving access." That's right. A key goal. Yeah, how the funding was able to help. "Concrete examples of barriers to service prior to the funding." Exactly. "Challenges then versus successes now." Yeah, exactly. So we see clearly the need, and we see clearly how it was met or contributed to using LAV funding. All right.

Slide 18: When Narrative Data "Misses the Mark" (Minute 47:00)

So moving along here, let's talk about some things to avoid.

That's me, I think. Thank you, Erika.

So we just walked everyone through a number of very strong quotes and examples of narrative data. And we appreciate everyone participating and sharing in the chat. Everyone who was able to see and use a chat pod, and so we did try to read those comments aloud as they came in. And we'll continue trying to do that in case anyone is not able to see the chat pod and the comments coming in. Anyway, so we want to now go over a few times in which your narrative data might not be as useful or might raise some flags, even, for OVW to be concerned.

The first issue that we see in narrative data is when a grandiose claim of effectiveness is made, but the grantee does not use anecdotes or any kind of evidence of what they are doing with the funding, doesn't mention specifics at all, doesn't include detail, doesn't show the story. It just tells the ultimate take-away, without the robust description to explain why they are making such a statement. Something like that would be, an example of that would be, our program works. OK. That didn't really say anything about why it works, what it's working to do, how the funding directly makes a change in the community, or supports whatever it is that grantee is trying to get done. If you don't have anything to say, you don't need to restate what you've already said.

Another common thing to avoid is simply using the narrative to restate what was already reported in the quantitative data and does not further detail the efforts of the grant at all. So for example, simply stating we provided services to 78 victims, but not expanding on if those were comprehensive, or how those services impact the community, or how they have a long-term impact on those victims served if you tried something new for those services. Anything like that would really add that detail and additional color or texture, as Erika said, to help explain that quantitative data, rather than simply restating it. It's great to expand upon the quantitative data in a narrative, but it's most helpful if you do so with great detail and to talk about it in the greater context of those outputs. Get to the outcomes.

And finally, writing about activities that were not supported by the OVW grant or are not allowable with OVW program funds is another thing that you want to try to avoid. First of all, anything not directly funded with grant funding should not be being reported on the progress report. And so writing about things that are not allowable or weren't supported with grant funding is, at best, not very useful, but could also cause your grant to be held up, which we definitely don't want to happen. But it can cause some confusion on the performance measurement side if your program specialist sees that and then becomes concerned that you might have used grant funds for something that was not allowable under your grant.

We got a question in the chat that says, "Should we show how OVW funds leveraged other resources and what was able to be done with all?" Yes, Margaret, that is a great question. And I would say, yes, use narrative to talk about that greater impact and how you were able to leverage other resources. Just make sure to be very, very clear about what was and was not funded with the grant funding, so that there's no concern that grant funding might have been used for something that was not approved of by your program specialist. But it's great to talk about the way grant funding expands and multiplies the impact in a community, such as that quote that we read to you earlier about how the one advocate supported and sort of guided other staff to provide better services, even though it was only the one advocate who was grant-funded. So that's a great suggestion that everyone should consider how to leverage-- excuse me, how to talk about how funds were leveraged. Just make sure to be very clear to differentiate what was grant-funded from what was not grant-funded and was supported with other funds.

Someone asked if they can redo their semi-annual report, as it was sent out yesterday. The short answer is no, you can't resubmit once you've already submitted. However, you can sometimes make changes to specific pieces by way of sending us an email, and also emailing your program specialist. Let them know, let them and us know what you submitted that you think was in error or that you wish you could change, and either your program specialist or we here at VAWA MEI should be able to change to correct the data from our end. Depending on the magnitude of the issue and what it was. Thank you for the question.

Yeah, thanks for the great questions. And that question about leveraging or OVW funds helping you secure or leverage other funding-- that's great.

Slide 19: If You're Just Getting Started, Write About (Minute 53:00)

This is kind of a segue into our next slide, which is if you're just getting started, what do you write about? And this refers back to another question earlier that we addressed. So there are a few things that, if you're just getting off the ground with your grant, that you can write about. And one of them is what are those resources and tools in your community that already do exist that you're going to be tapping into in order to multiply the effect of this funding?

You can also write about the gaps in the community that this grant is going to help you address. You may have already talked about this in your application, but this is where OVW looks in order to figure out how to improve their funding, how to improve their technical assistance, and also to report back to Congress and other stakeholders what's going on in the field. So they're not going to necessarily share what you share, but they're getting a sense of what's going on out there. So whatever you can provide them with to convey that is helpful, even if you're just getting started.

You can also write about your planning efforts. So this is part of the project is to plan it. So if you haven't deployed your full budget-- say, you haven't served any victims or survivors yet, but you're still planning, that's still important to narrate on the progress report. Either way, OVW wants to hear about what you're doing and how you're thinking about the project as it goes along. Yeah, so those are some of the things that you can talk about. Like Devon said, just avoiding talking about things that are just completely funded by other sources just to fill space. That's not helpful. Again, if you don't have anything in that particular narrative field to write about, because you're in a planning phase, that's OK to say.

So an example of something to write about or an example of this kind of writing in the early stages of the grant funding, is from this grantee who says, "There are few services for youth survivors of dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking in our county. For those that do exist, there's little communication about those resources. CY, Consolidated Youth, funding allowed us to conduct a thorough needs assessment and develop a plan to address issues, while still including many of our community partners. We are excited to use that information in the implementation phase of our program moving forward. So that highlights planning, but also partnerships that are being built. Even when they're not fully in the implementation phase, they are building relationships with their community partners. Which, as you all I'm sure know, is a critical aspect of OVW grant-funded work.

Slide 20: What Information to Prioritize (Minute 56:30)

Thank you, Erika. So before I move us through what information to prioritize, I do want to respond to two different questions that came into the chat. One question was, is the progress report submitted in Just Grants, or is submitted on the VAWA MEI site? And this is a great question because this is very, very key to get straight. And it's very confusing, especially nowadays. You must submit your progress reporting form into Just Grants. You must submit your progress reporting form into Just Grants before the due date, which, if you're a discretionary grantee, is July 30, in order for your funds not to be frozen. There's an automatic system in place that will freeze your funds if you do not submit your progress report, upload your progress report, into the Just Grants system by the end of July 30. And I believe that's Eastern Time. So, very key.

Thank you so much for the question. We definitely should have stated that with more clarity at the very beginning. Thank you for asking it. And then the second question I want to address was a question, are we able to use research to support the anecdotal data in the narrative? And this is a great question that I have never gotten before. And I'm actually going to let Erika answer, because she is always very excited to talk about research.

Well, and thank you from Jose Juan. So thank you. Yes, you can certainly mention recent research in your narrative. I wouldn't lean too heavily on it. I would definitely give most of the space to the activities that you're

carrying out, but it certainly doesn't hurt to say, for instance, research has shown that this approach is most effective, and we are following best practices when we are doing this, and we are seeing the impact in our community. So just stating that it's aligned with what research shows is a fine way to strengthen your narrative.

Or and as we've said, this is a place to elevate to OVW that what's missing. So for instance, in the remaining areas of need question, where it asks you what else is needed in your community, what work would be helpful to be doing, or what is preventing you from having the impact you would like to-- that question could be a place where you say we know that research shows this, but we are not able to do it because of this. So those are a few examples of ways that you could pull in research in the field, or even academic research that you're aware of. Hopefully that's helpful. Devon, if you have anything to add to that, I welcome your input.

I think it was great. Thank you, Erika. Hopefully that helped you, person who asked that question. And if you ever want to talk-- actually, this is for everyone-- if any of you ever want more information, beyond what we've gone over today, about how to make the best use of your narrative space or how to fill out any section at all, quantitative or qualitative, of the progress reporting forms, please feel free to reach out to us at vawamei.org. You can submit a contact request, and also our information is at the end of this PowerPoint. We're always happy to talk to grantees on the phone. It helps break up our day. And it's the most rewarding part of our jobs, speaking for myself, at least. So don't ever hesitate to reach out with a question, especially if there's something that we didn't quite cover today that you would like more clarity on. OK, thank you.

So what information to prioritize. Typically, we have folks, grantees, reaching out to us saying, help, I don't know what to write. How do I answer this question, or how do I use of this space? However, every so often, we do get grantees saying, I have so much to write I don't have the space. I'm running out of space because there is a character limit on each narrative question. So this slide is for all of you. If you are trying to figure out how to prioritize and narrow down what you want to write because you don't have the space to write everything you want to, here is what we suggest.

We suggest that the numbers that require more explanation or are not captured elsewhere on the form is exactly what you should prioritize above everything else in the narrative. Then, secondly, challenges and accomplishments that cannot be conveyed through numbers alone. Now that's a broad one and can be hard to navigate, but whatever top of mind comes to you is where you should start. If you have, I'm sure, most of you have a whole slew of challenges that are unique. And so if you think about the biggest and the most affecting ones, start there. And same with accomplishments. There's so much that everyone is able to do with the funding that the numbers don't capture. If you're wondering how to prioritize, start with three pieces-- biggest accomplishments, biggest challenges, and numbers that are not captured anywhere on the form or that really need some context behind them to be understood.

Slide 21: COVID-19 Reporting Guidance for Narrative Questions (Minute 1:02:10)

Thanks, Devon. So moving on, we just want to give some COVID-19 specific reporting guidance, as it pertains to the narrative questions. And we are very aware that the pandemic has had an extraordinary impact on everyone, and particularly on those of you who are providing services throughout the country. So we would love to see you try and capture that in the narrative. OVW would like to see you capture that in the narrative. And we're recommending that you try and use the words COVID-19 or pandemic in that narrative. You probably would anyway, but just for the context of why. As you might imagine, there's an enormous amount of narrative coming in. 19 grant programs, some of them with hundreds of grantees. So we're literally doing word searches in order to find this kind of impact.

So you're helping us capture all of it, when you write your narratives and use those words. And use them to explain how the pandemic has impacted the status of your grant goals and objectives, what you were meant to do, and how you were either not able to do it, or you were able to do it despite the challenges. That you innovated, which we know you have been doing, that you've got creative in order to do what you needed to do. And then this is

another place where you can speak to any extension or anything else that you may have done in order to adapt that you've been in contact with your program specialist about what has been approved, in order to help you adapt to those challenges.

Slide 22: COVID-19 Reporting Guidance (Continued) (Minute 1:04:15)

So as Erika just said, one thing that the narrative can be really helpful for right now is focusing on anything or conveying anything you are unable to collect for the report due to COVID-19. OVW has given clear guidance to us that we should be telling everyone, please do not report any estimates. If there's any number on the report that you do not have documentation to back up or you're unsure of what the exact number is, you need source documentation. So you must, we advise you to leave blank any quantitative data field that you do not have source documentation for. So use the narrative to explain any missing data or activities that you conducted, but you're unable to quantify at this time. Your program specialist and everyone at OVW knows that working through COVID-19 required a lot of ingenuity and change and flexibility from grantees to continue to serve victims and do work in their communities. So they will understand if sections are blank. So use the narrative to discuss where that might be, anything you are unable to collect, which could be numbers of victims served, demographics information, training numbers, any of that.

Slide 23: COVID-19 Resources (Minute 1:05:40)

And then we want to just share some COVID-19 resources with you. These different resources can help guide you as you collect data and complete your progress report. First of all, OVW itself has created a whole guide on their website, which is a list of resources and FAQs, specifically for grantees such as yourself. That's that first link. We hear at VAWA MEI have created an FAQs list based on the questions that we have been getting on COVID-19, and that's the second link on this page here. Finally, you can contact us directly on our website, as I mentioned. And there was a whole webinar about reporting in a pandemic, which was more of a Q&A, office hours webinar, and that was reported and it is also available on our VAWA MEI website, so you can consult any of these for guidance about how to report. And you can also, as I said, call us or email us or submit a Contact Us request, and we will do our best to provide as much support as possible on how to fill out your progress report, given all the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Slide 24: Key Narrative Questions (Minute 1:07:00)

Now for the last portion of this webinar, we just want to walk you briefly through the key narrative questions on the form, for anyone who has not filled out their progress reporting form before or might be a new person to their role. Or maybe it will just be helpful to hear us walk through these key narrative questions. So the first in the series, on every progress reporting form, is the grant goals and objectives question.

Slide 25: Key Narrative Questions (Question 61) (Minute 1:07:40)

And this is where you should literally take your work plan that OVW has approved, or your grant proposal, depending on which is more recent. And walk through what have you been able to achieve, where are you in meeting those goals and objectives, what's the status of them? One thing that can be kind of confusing about this question is that there are multiple fields. One that says status, one that's more just a general box, and then a third, a comment box. And you do need to write something into all of the fields on that question, grant goals, objectives question for the form to validate and allow you to submit it. Something that hangs folks a lot of times, so just wanted to name that.

Slide 26: Key Narrative Questions (Questions 64 & 65) (Minute 1:08:20)

One thing to note is that the numbers here are off of the ICJR form, and the numbers change from form to form. They're not all the same, so you can ignore the number but focus on the questions because they're all phrased the same way. So the next one and one thing I might add is that the goals and objectives question is mandatory every single reporting period. So you must fill it out. The next two questions are one about additional information. Oh,

they're actually not next. I see, these are-- I see. OK. I take that back. Their slides are slightly out of order. So here are two more narrative questions, which are actually optional.

One is additional information regarding the effectiveness of your grant program. So this is a great place for you to talk about the full scope of your work, including the impact of the pandemic on your programming. You can get into the details here. Share about just the whole big picture, the context, tell stories, show the impact of grant funding on your program in your community. The other, additional information that you would like us to know about the data submitted, is always the last question on every single progress reporting form. And you can think of this question as your note directly to us at VAWA MEI. This is where you should write about any number that is going to sort of raise our eyebrows, or that you know was not able to be tracked. So maybe you had to put in dummy data to get the form to validate to allow you to submit it.

So if you have data that you know is actually just fake data, this question, additional information about the data submitted, is where you should write us a note talking about those numbers that need to be deleted or erased from the record. And we will clean that up on our end. It's also where you should help explain any numbers that are extremely large. If you know that you trained tens of thousands more professionals this reporting period than a previous one, and you have the source documentation to prove it, so you reported those tens of thousands of people, please write us a note in this question and say, this is what we did. This is how we were able to do it. These are not typos.

We go to this question when we begin cleaning any data set, and we keep whatever you write there in mind as we move through quantitative data, trying to figure out how it all fits together and what makes sense. Because if we do see anything that we think is a typo, we'll reach out to you. We just want to make sure that everything is reported as accurately and thoroughly as possible. So it's also where you should note any missing data. OK.

Slide 27: Key Narrative Questions (Questions 62 & 63) (Minute 1:11:10)

And then the next two questions that we're going to discuss are required on only some reporting forms, like some periods, I should say. It's for all grant programs, but it's only ever required on a January to June progress reporting form. Not the July to December. And these are, what do you see as the most significant areas of remaining need? And this question, even though it's not required, we encourage you to fill out every single time that you think of something and want to respond here. Because this is really your opportunity to reach out to OVW and explain why you're not able to meet your grant goals and objectives, or perhaps what is missing in the larger picture in your community, completely aside from what you were grant funded to do. It's really where you can write about anything that's a need that is alive in your community and impacting your ability to do your work or services in general.

So could be anything like a geographical challenges, particular underserved populations, or anything like that. Maybe a systemic issue in your community, even if it's aside from the scope of the grant. And then, finally, this other question on the forms asks, what has program funding allowed you to do that you could not do prior to receiving this funding? And this is where you should get as concrete as you want in conveying that before and after picture, like some of what we shared. This is one that we frequently go to when we're looking for strong quotes to share about the impact of grant funding. Is there anything you want to elaborate on that, Erika? As the person who is reading all, every single bit of narrative, all of the time.

No, yeah, just that funding allowed question is our go-to, so yeah, definitely use it. And like Devon said, even though it's only required on the January to June form, you're welcome to use it in the July to December period, as well, if you have something to say. But otherwise, that's great.

Slide 28: Visit VAWA MEI's Website! (Minute 1:13:40)

So we're wrapping up here, and I just want to direct you to our website. In the last couple of years, our website has gotten a lot better than it used to be. It is full of resources for you to access, including recordings of this webinar

from past years, past reporting periods, program-specific progress reporting, webinar recordings and materials, and frequently asked questions. All kinds of things on there for you to find. We will also be emailing out the recording of this webinar to you. I think Julia just said in the chat we're going to hope to get that out by Monday at the latest this coming week. You can also always reach out to me or Devon, specifically our info will be on the last slide here in just a moment. And again, you can fill out the request form on our website to get one-on-one attention, as well.

Slide 29: Your Turn! Any Questions? (Minute 1:14:55)

So wrapping up, we are opening it up to your questions. If you haven't put them in yet, you're welcome to do that now. And we will try to answer them.

Slide 30: Thank you! (Minute 1:15:10)

Not seeing anything coming in immediately. But we will stay on for a little while. But yeah, that is the end of our actual content.

Yeah, we'll continue to hang out for another minute or two if you have a question. You can use the Q&A or you can type it into the chat, but thank you everyone for being here with us today. I know this is another one of the highlights of our job for me, and I'm grateful to Erika and Julia for joining me, and to TA2TA all of our wonderful interpreters and translators and additional services. But also to all of you for joining us. Thank you. And I hope you all have a beautiful rest of the day, and it's not storming gigantic raindrops on you wherever you are, like it is here. Which I'm thinking is micro weather.

Or if where you are and you really need it to rain, I hope it's raining. Because I think that's the case for a lot of people right now.

Very true. Good point, Erika. Thank you.

Stay safe, stay safe and be well, wherever you are. And whatever your land is needing, may it get it Yeah, and thank you to NCJFCJ for this platform, and yeah, I'd also like to shout out the interpreters and translators and transcriptors.

Thanks, everyone. We did get a question. In the status of goals or objectives, should we put completed or approved? And that depends on where you are. I think approved is intended for if you recently changed your grant goals and objectives, and you have your program specialist sign off on it. Whereas, if it's fully completed, that completed is meant for if you have the grant goal and objective, it was approved, you did it, and now it's completely done, then you put completed. And also for anyone listening, another option is ongoing or in progress, between those two phases of approval. Or another one is pending approval, if you submit a change request or are working on revising your strategic plan, and your program specialist has not yet signed off on it, then you want to put pending approval in that status line. So it really depends on where you're at, and again, we're happy to always walk you through that if you're having trouble deciding exactly what the status of a particular goal or objective is.

And I'm seeing that there are some that Julia has answered in the Q&A box here, but that it's worth elevating for everyone who's still on. There was a question regarding the additional information question about the effectiveness question, and this person is asking if that's a good place to talk about other technical assistance that they received. In this case, specifically, from Vera. And in this case, they were, it wasn't necessarily helpful and that they may need to improve or have improved TA provided to them. And yeah, Julia answered that this is a place that you can talk about TA that you've received, whether it was a positive experience or left something to be desired that you needed a different form of TA or different content. This would be a place where you can elevate that information to OVW, because again, OVW is looking for clues as to what would be helpful in supporting grantees like you in the field. Julia, are there any other things that have come in that you feel like are worth elevating to the group?

No, I think for good. Most things were handled in the chat pod.

Great, thank you so much for doing that. All right.