

## Abstract

Applicant: State of Connecticut, Judicial Branch

Project Title: Hartford Community Court Enhancement

Amount Requested: \$1,428,000.00

Grant Category: VII: Supporting Problem Solving Courts

Goal: To preserve and create jobs, promote economic recovery and stabilize the budget of the State of Connecticut, Judicial Branch to help ensure that the essential services currently provided by the Hartford Community Court continue to be available to the residents of the city of Hartford and the surrounding communities.

### Strategies:

- Increase the capacity of the Hartford Community court to provide access to social services.
- Increase the capacity of the Hartford Community Court to provide restorative justice to the community through supervised community service and use of mediation.

### Deliverables:

1. Two community service work crews (new service, creating five new contractor positions)
2. One Mediation/Recovery specialist (new service, creating one new contractor position)
3. One Community Services Coordinator (restored service, reestablishing an eliminated contractor position)
4. Women's Holistic Health Program (continued service, supporting two contractor positions)

Coordination Plans: The Hartford Community Court will continue its history of coordination with non-profit community organizations in the execution of this project.

Project Narrative: Grant Category: VII Supporting Problem Solving Courts

The Hartford Community Court is the product of a grassroots effort organized by Hartford community leaders, and was made operational on November 10, 1998 through the cooperative efforts of community activists, the Connecticut Judicial Branch, and representatives of local and state governments. The court is located in downtown Hartford and is primarily dedicated to the adjudication of crimes that have a deleterious effect on the community or “quality of life crimes”. These have been defined as misdemeanor offenses and violations of Hartford Municipal Code which have been identified by Hartford residents as contributing to a decline in their sense of public safety and community spirit, as well as fueling the deterioration of the neighborhoods in which they live and work. Individuals charged with committing misdemeanor offenses such as petty larceny, threatening, breach of peace, patronizing prostitutes, prostitution and violations of municipal code including excessive noise, public drinking, disorderly conduct, and discharge of pollutants are referred to the Hartford Community Court.

Over the past ten years, Hartford Community Court has consistently ranked as one of the state’s high volume courts, having handled over 81,476 cases and having supervised the completion of over 293,158 hours of community service from its inception in 1998 through March 2009.

## Problem Statement

The Hartford Community Court enjoys a high level of support from Judicial Branch leadership, members of the criminal justice community, officials from the City of Hartford and the surrounding towns, non-profit human service groups, and community and neighborhood organizations. Its operation has long been a part of the regular Judicial Branch biennial budget process, however staffing and resource levels have begun to fall short of the mounting demands placed upon the court as a result of its increasing caseload. As a result, community service assignments are becoming increasingly delayed, social service staffing has been reduced, and successful court programs such as mediation and the Women's Holistic Health Program may face reduction or elimination. The State of Connecticut currently faces a budget deficit of unprecedented proportions, and may no longer be able to provide adequate resources needed to maintain essential services.

This project seeks to create jobs and ensure the provision of essential services by providing the court with the staffing and resources necessary to expand and continue its operation, specifically by providing:

- Staffing and resources for two additional community service work crews;
- Staffing for client referrals to social services;
- Staffing to offer mediation and restitution services, and;
- Staffing and resources to operate the Women's Holistic Health Program.

## Design and Implementation

The Hartford Community Court puts into practice the philosophies put forth by George L. Kelling and Catherine Coles in their 1996 book entitled, "Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing Crime in Our Communities", which simply put, states that by fixing

problems quickly when they are small (minor crimes, such as prostitution) it will prevent problems from accumulating or escalating (leading to major crimes, such as drug dealing and assaults), and thereby prevent urban decay, and maintain the health of neighborhoods and communities. This is achieved by the court through the use of restorative justice, encouraging offenders to take responsibility for their actions by providing some form of restitution to the community in which their particular crime took place. This serves as a means to restore any physical value that was diminished as a result of the crime, as a visible deterrent to any additional criminal activity in the area, and to provide palpable evidence to the victims of the crime that justice has been served.

### Community Service

Community service is the primary sanction imposed upon defendants by the court and is assigned, whenever possible, to take place in the neighborhood or area where the crime took place. Work crews are purposefully made to be highly visible by means of clothing and road signs identifying them as “Hartford Community Court-Community Service Work Crew”, so that the community may witness the punitive and restorative aspects the court’s sanction. The judge explains the court’s expectations for compliance with its order of community service to each individual defendant at their hearing. This helps to establish a one-on-one connection between the judge and the defendant, establish the accountability of the defendant to the judge, to reinforce with the defendant the victimization of the community that has taken place as a result of their actions, and the restorative nature of the sanction assigned.

Community service work crews are closely supervised by a community-based organization that has been contracted by the court. Work crew supervisors report to the court on a daily basis to ensure that safety and accountability are maintained, while also making certain

that work crews perform work that is meaningful, visible, and provides a real benefit to the community. Defendants assigned to perform community service are assigned to a court docket; therefore community service is considered a court appearance. If a defendant is absent from community service without having been excused by the court, an arrest warrant is issued for failure to appear. Any defendant who does not meet the community service requirements as set forth by the court faces imposition of sanctions determined by the court.

This project will add two additional work crews to the court's existing four, increasing the capacity of the court's community service component by fifty percent. This will create five new community-based jobs in the Hartford area.

### Social Services

All defendants who appear before the community court are required to participate in an evaluation conducted by members of the Hartford Community Court social services team to develop a comprehensive individual service plan to address their individual needs. Defendants are evaluated and given referrals to programs or assigned program slots, usually at little or no cost to themselves, for the following services: mental health, employment assistance, job training, education, inpatient drug and alcohol treatment, life skills for young offenders, underage drinking prevention programs, truancy prevention programs, sexually transmitted disease screening and treatment, women's holistic health program, food stamps, public assistance, rental assistance, mediation programs, and homeless shelters. Plans are often times adjusted to meet the changing needs of defendants; however, defendants are required to follow the service plan that they develop in conjunction with the court as a condition of their agreement, and non-compliance may result in the imposition of additional sanctions determined by the court.

This project seeks to restore a community service coordinator to the program who will conduct assessments and make referrals to social services. This will directly create one additional community-based job in the Hartford area, and may indirectly stimulate additional employment through increased referrals to job training and employment assistance.

#### Mediation/Restitution

Another means used to apply restorative justice by the Hartford Community Court is its mediation and restitution program. This program attempts to settle disputes, such as property damage or larceny, “outside of the court” by using trained, community-based mediators who bring the parties of a dispute together and help negotiate an equitable settlement to the matter. In 2008, eight hundred forty-three cases were sent to mediation by the Hartford Community Court, with a success rate of approximately 85%. Between July 2008 and April 2009, approximately \$27,000.00 in restitution has been returned to victims through this program.

This project seeks to create one additional community-based job in the Hartford area through hiring of an additional mediator/restitution specialist. This will expand the capacity of the mediation program, help ease the court’s caseload, and increase the amount of restitution received by victims.

#### Women’s Holistic Health Program

Women engaged in prostitution possess a unique set of needs and challenges that obstruct their rehabilitation and often lead to continued recidivism. These issues include drug dependency, legal and social issues, and in many cases, mental illness. Women who have been arrested for prostitution need to break their cyclical lifestyle, which often involves a history of drug and alcohol dependence and violence, as well as a pattern of addictive behavior and retribution from authoritative street figures.

The Women's Holistic Health Program is an intensive, short term, program that is designed to empower women charged with prostitution to abandon their current lifestyle and to choose a more productive and healthier lifestyle by addressing and providing interventions for these underlying issues. Participants in the program are required to attend a series of protocol sessions designed to educate, enhance self-esteem, and offer treatment alternatives for mental health and substance abuse. Participants are also required to successfully perform court-supervised community service as part of this program. The goal of the program is to provide an effective education and counseling program for women charged with prostitution that would reduce street prostitution, encourage offenders to adopt healthy and productive lifestyles, and reduce the rate of recidivism among offenders.

This project will sustain two existing jobs through continued financial support of the Women's Holistic Health Program which includes the salaries of the program's two classroom facilitators. It will provide the means to continue the operation of this service by the Hartford Community Court in a fiscal environment in which the future of the program may be uncertain.

This proposal is designed to be implemented such that it will meet both the job creation and criminal justice goals of the Byrne Recovery Act funds. It will create seven new jobs in the Hartford area and preserve two existing community-based jobs, for a total of nine jobs directly affected. The project will also contribute to the reduction of crime and increase community involvement in the criminal justice system by providing financial support to a proven, and soundly based criminal justice practice, the community court.

#### Capabilities/Capacity

The Hartford Community Court has demonstrated that the restorative justice model can be successfully applied in a high caseload setting across both urban and rural areas, and be

sustained and expanded over time. The community court has helped to build public trust and confidence in Connecticut's criminal justice system by establishing and maintaining credible ties to the community, by listening to its needs and concerns, by responding with fair, timely, efficient, and open delivery of justice and by acting as a partner in the effort to improve the quality of life within the community. It has been able to assemble and hold together a comprehensive network of health and human service agencies, community groups, education, employment and training professionals, and criminal justice agencies under one roof, so that individual and community needs can be identified and filled, problems can be met with action, and everyone has a stake in the outcome. In recognition of these accomplishments, Hartford Community Court has been designated as a "Mentor Court" by the Center for Court Innovation, and has demonstrated the capacity to meet the criminal justice goals of this project.

An accounting of grant funds for this project, separate from other Judicial Branch funds, will be performed by the Branch's Grants Management Unit. A unique account identifier (SID number) will be assigned to funds received as a part of this project so that they may be independently managed, tracked and reported to the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Personnel assigned to the Grants Management Unit, as well as other grant administrators have had extensive experience with Department of Justice programmatic and financial standards, rules and reporting, and will attend the financial management seminar required as a part of this project to ensure that funds are properly utilized and results are reported in an accurate and timely.

The Hartford Community Court has been the subject of a formal independent evaluation conducted by Justice Education Center, Inc. in 2002, as well as the subject of literature reviews conducted by organizations such as the Center for Court Innovation in 2005. It collects large



amounts of data in order to continually assess and improve its operations, identify possible trends, and plan for the future. These include, but are not limited to: demographic, summons, arrest, criminal history and bail information for all participants, docket management data (volume, case type, appearance rates, dispositions, etc.) community service data (referrals, hours assigned, hours performed, type of service, etc.).

This experience shows that the Judicial Branch and the Hartford Community Court have the capacity and willingness to participate in any independent evaluation that is required by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Branch and the Hartford Community Court have a history of successfully performing under numerous Federal grants that have required meeting diverse sets of goals and numerous reporting requirements. The goals, objectives and activities of this project are designed such that the project will be able to successfully achieve the performance measures as delineated by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and that reporting requirements will be met.

### Impact

This program is expected to have the following impacts:

- Creation of seven new community-based jobs in the Hartford area;
- Maintain an additional two existing community-jobs;
- Maintain essential services of the court (community service, social services referral, mediation and the Women's Holistic Health Program);
- Increase the capacity of the community mediation program and reduce court caseload;
- Increase the operational capacity of community service work crews by 50%.

Budget Summary

<b>Hartford Community Court Enhancement</b>	
<b>Category</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Personnel	\$0.00
Fringe	\$0.00
Travel	\$8,000.00
Equipment	\$0.00
Supplies	\$0.00
Construction	\$0.00
Consultants/Contracts	\$1,420,000.00
Other Costs	\$0.00
Indirect	\$0.00
Total State Matching Funds	\$0.00
Total Federal Funds Requested	\$1,428,000.00

## Budget Narrative

### Personnel

There are no items budgeted for this project in the “Personnel” category.

### Fringe

There are no items budgeted for this project in the “Fringe” category.

### Travel

Funds have been budgeted to comply with the Bureau of Justice Assistance’s requirement to allow two staff to attend two meetings, including the financial management training seminar presented by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (DOJ, OJP, OCFO) as identified in the program instructions. All travel expenses will be reimbursed in accordance with State of Connecticut, Judicial Branch reimbursement policies. Amounts are estimated based upon prior experience.

- Financial Management Seminar, 2 days, Washington, D.C.

Travel:	\$400.00	
Lodging:	\$750.00	\$250/night x 3 nights
Per Diem:	\$200.00	\$50/day x 4 days
Other Expenses:	\$150.00	Allowable expenses such as parking, etc.
Total:	\$1,500.00	

$$2 \text{ staff} \times \$1,500.00/\text{trip} = \$3,000.00$$

- Additional Meeting, unknown duration, expected in Washington, D.C.

Estimates for expenses are similar to those listed in the seminar above, however additional funds have been budgeted in the case of a seminar of longer duration, or a location other than Washington, D.C.

$$2 \text{ staff} \times \$2,500.00/\text{trip} = \$5,000.00$$

The total amount budgeted for the “Travel” category is \$8,000.00.

## Equipment

There are no items budgeted for this project in the “Equipment” category.

## Supplies

There are no items budgeted for this project in the “Supplies” category.

## Construction

There are no items budgeted for this project in the “Construction” category.

## Consultants/Contracts

Funds have been budgeted to acquire the services of independent contractors to conduct the activities described below. Funds will be distributed in accordance with existing service provider contracts in cases where it is allowable by Federal, State and Judicial Branch policies. Funds unable to be distributed to existing contractors will be offered to the public by means of an open solicitation, to be conducted shortly after notification of award of funds under the Byrne Competitive Grant Program. (Please refer to the project narrative for additional details regarding each activity.)

- Contract/Solicitation #1: Community Service Work Crews  
Budget: \$450,000/year x 2 years (24 months) = \$900,000.00

Funding for community service works crews is anticipated to include an estimated 5 additional contractor staff positions for supervision of offenders, vehicle lease and operating expenses for two additional vans to transport offenders, and supplies and allowable indirect operating expenses.

- Contract/Solicitation #2: Mediation Project Restitution Specialist  
Budget: \$65,000/year x 2 years (24 months) = \$130,000.00

Funding for the Mediation Project Restitution Specialist is anticipated to include salary and fringe benefits for one additional contractor position.

- Contract/Solicitation #3: Social Services Caseworker  
Budget: \$65,000/year x 2 years (24 months) = \$130,000.00

Funding for the Social Services Caseworker is anticipated to include salary and fringe benefits for one additional contractor position.

- Contract/Solicitation #4: Women's Holistic Health Program  
Budget: \$130,000/year x 2 years (24 months) = \$260,000.00

Funding for the Women's Holistic Health Program is anticipated to include salary and fringe benefits for two existing contractor positions, supplies and allowable indirect operating expenses.

The total amount budgeted for the Consultant/Contractual category is \$1,420,000.00.

#### Other Costs

There are no items budgeted for this project in the “Other Costs” category.

#### Indirect

There are no items budgeted for this project in the “Indirect” category.

#### State Matching Funds

There are no state matching funds for this project.

#### Total Federal Request

The total request for Federal funds for this project is \$1,428,000.00.