



Montana Board of Crime Control Request for Proposals

2025 John R. Justice (JRJ) Student Loan Repayment Program Application Deadline: Thursday, January 23, 2025, at 12:00 noon

Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided upon request. Persons who need this material in another format to participate in the Request for Proposals (RFP) process should contact the Montana Board of Crime Control (MBCC), 5 South Last Chance Gulch, PO Box 201408, Helena, MT 59620-1408; Phone (406) 444-3604; Fax (406) 444-4722; Montana Relay 711 or <https://dphhs.mt.gov/detd/mtap/traditionalrelayservice>.*

**Text that appears blue and underlined indicates a link to a webpage or online document.*

I. Eligibility

Eligible applicants include full-time prosecutors and public defenders in Montana who agree to remain employed as a Montana public defender or prosecutor for at least three years.

Prosecutor: an attorney and full-time employee of the State or unit of local government who is continually licensed to practice law and prosecute criminal or juvenile delinquency cases at the State or local government level (including supervision, education, or training of other persons prosecuting such cases).

Public Defender: an attorney who is continually licensed to practice law and is a full-time employee of the State or unit of local government who provides legal representation to indigent persons in criminal or juvenile delinquency cases (including supervision, education, or training of other persons providing such representation); a full-time employee of a nonprofit organization operating under a contract with the State or unit of local government who devotes substantially all the employee's full-time employment to providing legal representation to indigent persons in criminal or juvenile delinquency cases.

Full-time employment is considered not less than 75 percent of a 40-hour work week.

Ineligible

Attorneys who are in private practice (and not a full-time employee of a non-profit organization) are *not* eligible, even if providing public defense services under contract to the State.

Elected officials and employees of the federal government are *not* eligible.

II. Deadline

Applications must be submitted via [the secure file transfer services](#), on or before **Thursday, January 23, 2025 at 12:00 noon**. To mitigate any potential submission difficulties, MBCC strongly urges application submission 72 hours prior to the deadline.

Late applications will not be processed or considered for award.

Schedule of Events	
RFP Issue Date	Thursday, December 12, 2024
Pre-Application Offeror's Call	Wednesday, December 18, 2024, at 10 AM
Deadline for receipt of written questions	Friday, January 17, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.
Responses to questions will be posted on the MBCC website within 7 calendar days of receipt, through the last Friday before the RFP is closed.	
Application Submission Deadline	Thursday, January 23, 2025, at 12:00 noon
Staff and Committee Review	January 2025 - February 2025
Application Review Committee (ARC)	February 2025 (tentative)
Board of Crime Control Approval	March 2025

For applicants without internet access, who cannot apply electronically via email, contact MBCC at (406) 444-3604 or mbcc@mt.gov (listing “**RFP 2025 JRJ Submission Assistance**” as the email subject) for approval and submission instructions.

III. Program-Specific Information

Overview and Purpose Area(s)

The Montana Board of Crime Control (MBCC) is soliciting applications from Montana prosecutors and public defenders under the John R. Justice (JRJ) Student Loan Repayment Program. The JRJ Student Loan Repayment Program provides loan payment assistance to Montana prosecutors and public defenders who agree to remain employed as public defenders and prosecutors for at least three years. The maximum amount an eligible JRJ award beneficiary can receive per award year is \$10,000. The maximum amount any eligible JRJ awardee may receive through multiple JRJ awards is \$60,000.

Equal Allocation Requirement

JRJ requires the funding for loan repayments to be allocated in equal amounts for both prosecutors and public defenders. Actual award amounts are dependent on the number of applicants who qualify for funding and the total amount of funding available. There is no minimum amount of an award set. For the 2025 JRJ award, approximately \$150,000 will be available and awarded from this RFP.

Geographic Distribution

MBCC will utilize the 11 Office of Public Defender regions to ensure fair geographic distribution of JRJ funds.

Least Ability to Pay Formula Requirement

Priority will be given to eligible beneficiaries who have the least ability to repay their loans.

Loan Eligibility

Federal student loans, including the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFEL), William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan, Federal Perkins Loans, Federal Consolidation loans, and Federal Direct Consolidation loans are eligible for repayment.

Ineligible Loans

Loans in default, loans made to the parents of dependent students, including Federal Direct PLUS Loans, and private, commercial, or alternative student loans are *not* eligible.

Payment Information

Grant funds will only be paid to the institution holding the qualifying loan. In accordance with 34 U.S.C. § 10671(c), no funds will be paid directly to the beneficiary. Payments made on behalf of approved beneficiaries cannot exceed the total qualifying loan balance. The beneficiary remains responsible for any remaining payments or balances. MBCC will make one payment to the lending institution during the contract period. Neither the Department of Justice nor MBCC will be held responsible for any late fees assessed by the lending institution.

Service Agreement

As a condition precedent to the repayment of any loan obligation under this program, all eligible recipients must sign an agreement (Appendix A, B, or C.) For more information, please refer to [VI. Grantee Responsibilities Post-Award](#).

Recipients will receive a [Proof of Employment Form](#) from MBCC every six (6) months during the three-year service agreement period. This form must be completed and returned to MBCC within ten (10) calendar days. For more information, please refer to [VI. Grantee Responsibilities Post-Award](#).

Contract Period

Once approved for loan repayment, there is a rebuttable presumption that a beneficiary will be given priority consideration to receive funding during the second and third years of the three-year service agreement, depending on the availability of funds. Renewal is not automatic, and nothing shall obligate MBCC to renew a benefit or to renew such benefit in the same (or greater) amount previously received by a beneficiary.

IV. Application

Required Documents

Documents required under this RFP, that must be emailed include:

- [JRJ Application Form](#)
- [JRJ Financial Form](#)
- **Service Agreement** - Select the one applicable Service Agreement:
 - [Appendix A](#) – First Time Participant Service Agreement
 - [Appendix B](#) – Secondary Service Agreement. (Original, 3-year agreement has concluded.)
 - [Appendix C](#) – Active Service Agreement. (Within original, 3-year agreement.)
- [Proof of Employment Form](#)
- **National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) Document**
Applicants must obtain a NSLDS document for each student loan the applicant has with a lending institution, including the qualifying student loan in which assistance is being

requested. NSLDS is the U.S. Department of Education's central database for Federal Student Aid (FSA). NSLDS receives data from schools, guaranty agencies, the Direct Loan program, and other Department of Education programs. Applicants can access this document at <https://nslsdfap.ed.gov/login>. This site displays information on loan and/or grant amounts, outstanding balances, loan statuses, and disbursements. An applicant's Federal Student Aid (FSA) ID is required when accessing this site; if an applicant does not have an FSA ID, one will need to be created.

Questions or Clarification

MBCC will host a **pre-application Offeror's Call** on Wednesday, December 18, 2024, at 10 AM. MBCC staff will review the solicitation requirements and conduct a question and answer session with interested potential applicants.

To participate in the Offeror's Call, click the Join Zoom Meeting link below or join by phone.

Join Zoom Meeting	<u>Join by phone</u>
Meeting ID: 818 9113 1103	+1 646-558-8656 or
Password: 268888	+1 406-444-9999

Applicants may also contact Hanna Larson at (406) 444-2632 or Hanna.Larson@mt.gov to have the Offeror's Call information sent directly to them.

Applicants having questions or requiring clarification or interpretation of any section within this RFP must address these issues via the MBCC website **on or before Friday, January 17, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.** Questions shall be submitted via email to mbcc@mt.gov. Clear reference to the section, page and item in question must be included in the request. Questions received after the deadline will not be considered.

Written responses to all questions received by the deadline will be posted on the MBCC website within seven calendar days, to the **JRJ Q&A** doc. Applicants should consult the RFP Question and Answer Requests prior to posting a question to avoid duplication and prior to submitting an application to avoid missing potentially assistive material. Any other form of interpretation of this RFP will not be binding upon MBCC.

Receipt Verification

All applications received by the due date will receive a letter of acknowledgment. Late applications will not be processed or considered for award.

V. Application Processing and Award

Initial Screening

An initial screening of the applications received by the due date will occur to check the applications for completeness. All required documents must be completed and submitted before funds are awarded. **Refer to the [checklist](#) before submitting the online application and required additional documentation.**

Application Review Committee (ARC)

The ARC will provide recommendations to the MBCC Board of Directors for final funding decisions/awards. Applicants will receive written notice of the ARC recommendation.

Appeals

Per [MBCC policy B-04](#), if the ARC recommends denial, the applicant may appeal the recommendation. The appeal **must address** one of the following criteria:

- The Request for Proposal was inaccurate; or
- Staff provided misinformation

Awards

The MBCC Board of Directors will review all ARC recommendations and reserves the right to make final funding decisions. Funding will be awarded based on the availability of funding, least ability to pay and federal regulations. Following Board action, each applicant will receive either an Intent to Award Notice or a denial letter. If funded, the application documents form a legal and binding agreement with MBCC. Funds awarded to qualifying applicants are expected to be paid by July 2025. Before payments are sent to the awardee's financial institution, MBCC will reach out to each awardee to verify if their financial institution information/contacts in case there may have been any changes.

VI. Grantee Responsibilities Post-Award

As a condition precedent to the repayment of any loan obligation under this program, all eligible, first-time recipients must sign an agreement to remain employed as a Montana prosecutor or public defender for not less than three (3) years, unless involuntarily (i.e. layoffs) separated from employment. Termination as a result of misconduct or unacceptable performance does not qualify as involuntary separation. The period of service begins with the effective date of award.

Through the first 3 years of the program, JRJ beneficiaries have been subject only to one John R. Justice Student Loan Repayment Program (JRJSLRP) Service Agreement, executed at the time that the JRJ beneficiary first entered the JRJ program. Applicants who have not yet completed their 3-year service agreement will complete Appendix C, certifying that they remain bound by the terms of their service agreement. Should an applicant reapply for another JRJ award after the initial 3-year service agreement has expired, a 1-year service agreement time frame will then apply per additional award.

In the event a recipient voluntarily leaves a position as an eligible beneficiary, or in the event of involuntary separation for misconduct or unacceptable performance before completing the agreed upon period of service, the recipient will be indebted to the Federal government and must reimburse MBCC for the full amount of any student loan repayments made under this solicitation. The return of funds will not be determined on a pro-rata calculation. Recipients must notify MBCC, in writing, within five (5) calendar days of voluntary separation or involuntary separation for misconduct or unacceptable performance.

Recipients will receive a [Proof of Employment Form](#) from MBCC every six (6) months during the three-year service agreement period. This form must be completed and returned to MBCC within ten (10) calendar days. If the recipient does not complete and return the Proof of Employment in the mandated time frame, the recipient will be responsible for reimbursing MBCC for the full amount of any student loan repayments made under this solicitation.

VII. Application Checklist

Refer to this checklist before submitting the online application and required additional documentation. Submit using the secure file transfer service – [Instructions](#).

	JRJ Application Form
	JRJ Financial Form
	Service Agreement: (Select 1) Appendix A (First Time Applicant), Appendix B (After 3-year Agreement), Appendix C (Within 3-year Agreement).
	Proof of Employment
	National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) Document

