



Department of Justice Grant Fact Sheet & Timeline

Aug. 30, 2022

Serve & Connect was selected as one of 20 grant recipients by the Department of Justice (DOJ) in 2021 to support the department's criminal justice innovation efforts to address serious and violent crime issues through collaborative cross-sector approaches that help advance broader neighborhood development goals.

The grant will fund a 3-year, strategic, community-driven approach to gun violence reduction in Columbia's 29203 zip-code which accounts for nearly 50% of all person hit shootings in the city.

This project is led by Columbia-based nonprofit Serve & Connect (S&C) in collaboration with numerous law enforcement and community partners, including the Columbia Police Department (CPD), City of Columbia Parks & Recreation Department, City of Columbia Government, and residents living in the target community.

TIMELINE:

Nov. 2018 – Serve & Connect, in partnership with City of Columbia Police Department, Richland County Sheriff's Department (RCSD) and community leaders, establishes the North Columbia Youth Empowerment Initiative (NCYEI) to mobilize police and community partners around youth safety and empowerment.

May 2021 – DOJ announces applications for strategic approaches to crime reduction that leverage community knowledge and expertise to build public trust with law enforcement and make neighborhoods safer.

July 2021 – Serve & Connect submits grant application for Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program (Grants.gov O-BJA-2021-94001).

Dec. 2021 – Serve & Connect receives award letter from Department of Justice awarding the Columbia-based nonprofit \$964,480.

Jan. 2022 – Serve & Connect mobilizes community partners to begin grant implementation.

Feb. 2022 – Serve & Connect and community partners host Peace Walk in North Columbia.

May 2022 - Serve & Connect hires Erica Staley as site coordinator.

June-Aug. 2022 – Serve & Connect collaborates with CPD, RCSD, the City of Columbia Parks and Recreation Department and numerous partners to host a series of neighborhood events throughout the summer to bring together police and community.

Sept 2022 - March 2023 - Planning phase activities include a comprehensive needs and resource assessment, such as community listening sessions, and initial outreach activities including re-establishing the Police Athletic League, supporting neighborhood beautification efforts, and piloting a youth social justice leadership program.



April 2023 - Sept 2024 - Estimated implementation phase. Activities proposed in the grant application include hiring two outreach workers to serve as credible messengers and one partnership coordinator responsible for connecting high risk youth to local resources and mentors. The proposed action plan also includes support for community-driven initiatives to promote youth safety and support for community policing activities.

Sept. 2024 – Grant performance period estimated end date.

KEY FACTS:

- Serve & Connect was founded in 2015 by Kassy Alia after her husband, Forest Acres Police Officer Greg Alia, was shot and killed in the line of duty. [Full story](#)
- City of Columbia Police Department has been one of Serve & Connect's closest allies since the nonprofit was established.
- Columbia Police Department was the first police department in the state to participate in Serve & Connect's "Greg's Groceries" program, providing non-perishable food to neighbors in need.
- Serve & Connect has received two federal grants to support its mission since 2018. Funds are used to allow Serve & Connect the ability to serve as a support system to community partners, such as Columbia Police Department, Columbia Parks and Recreation and more.
- Serve & Connect applied for the Department of Justice Bureau of Assistance grant in July 2021 to build upon the successful work that Serve & Connect and the Columbia Police Department working in partnership with numerous community partners have accomplished in Columbia's 29203 zip code.
- Serve & Connect was one of only 20 awards provided by the Department of Justice Bureau of Assistance to organizations across America through the BJA FY 21 Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program (BCJI) (O-BJA-2021-94001) [View full list of grantees.](#)
- The Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation (BCJI) Program supports the Department of Justice's priorities to reduce serious and violent crime, including gun violence; dismantle gang activity; and strengthen local capacity to combat drug abuse. [Grant details](#)
- The current federal grant includes a planning phase where police and community leaders contribute to developing an action plan that will be implemented during the second phase of the grant.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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