

BJA FY25 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement – Competitive Grants Program

Anticipated Total Amount to Be Awarded Under This
Funding Opportunity: \$4,313,113

Anticipated Award Ceiling: Up to \$500,000

Anticipated Period of Performance Duration: 36
months

Funding Opportunity Number: O-BJA-2025-172472

Deadline to submit SF-424 in Grants.gov: **October 27, 2025, by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time**
Deadline to submit application in JustGrants: **November 3, 2025, by 8:59 p.m. Eastern Time**



BJA
Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice

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BASIC INFORMATION

The [U.S. Department of Justice](#) (DOJ), [Office of Justice Programs](#) (OJP), [Bureau of Justice Assistance](#) (BJA) is accepting applications for funding in response to this notice of funding opportunity (NOFO).

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Agency Name | U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Assistance |
| NOFO Title | FY25 BJA Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement – Competitive Grants Program |
| Announcement Type | Initial |
| Funding Opportunity Number | O-BJA-2025-172472 |
| Assistance Listing Number | 16.742 |

Executive Summary

This funding opportunity seeks to improve forensic science and medical examiner/coroner services, including services provided by laboratories operated by states and units of local government. Funding is to be used for forensic science laboratories and/or medical examiner/coroner offices. (See the [Definitions](#) section for additional information).

Under the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grant Program, state administering agencies (SAAs) may apply for both formula and competitive funds. Units of local government may apply for competitive funds. **This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is ONLY for competitive funds.** An applicant seeking to apply for Coverdell formula funds must apply separately under [BJA's FY25 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement – Formula Grants Program NOFO](#).

Please see the [Eligible Applicants](#) section for the eligibility criteria.

OJP is committed to advancing work that furthers DOJ's mission to uphold the rule of law, to keep our country safe, and to protect civil rights. OJP provides federal leadership, funding, and other critical resources to directly support law enforcement, combat violent crime, protect American children, provide services to American crime victims, and address public safety challenges, including human trafficking and the opioid crisis.

Key Dates and Times

| | |
|---|---|
| Funding Opportunity Release Date | September 16, 2025 |
| SAM.gov Registration/Renewal | Recommend beginning process by September 26, 2025, and no later than October 13, 2025 |
| Step 1: Grants.gov Application Deadline | 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on October 27, 2025 |
| Step 2: JustGrants Application Deadline | 8:59 p.m. Eastern Time on November 3, 2025 |

Funding Details

Anticipated Total Amount to Be Awarded Under This Funding Opportunity:

\$4,313,113

Anticipated Number of Awards: 14**Anticipated Award Ceiling:** Up to \$500,000

Note: Applicants may propose a budget that is less than the anticipated award ceiling amount. The budget should be reasonable to conduct the proposed project and be within the applicant's capacity to manage.

Anticipated Period of Performance Start Date: October 1, 2025**Anticipated Period of Performance Duration:** 36 months

Availability of Funds

This funding opportunity, and awards under this funding opportunity, are subject to the availability of funding and any changes or additional requirements that may be imposed by the agency or by law. In addition, nothing in this NOFO is intended to, nor does it, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States or its departments, agencies, entities, officers, employees, agents, or any other person.

The figures and calculations reflected in this NOFO are based on an estimated total amount available of \$28,754,088 (combined Coverdell Formula and Coverdell Competitive Program funds available), although the amount ultimately made available could be higher or lower. Applicants are strongly advised to check for updates to the NOFO prior to submitting applications.

Fifteen percent (\$4,313,113) of the available funds will be distributed among states and units of local government through the Coverdell Competitive Program. Considerations in award decisions will include the average annual number of Part 1 violent crimes reported by each state to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for calendar years 2021, 2022, and 2023; existing resources; and current needs of the potential grant recipient. Units of local government that provide forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services (whether through a forensic science laboratory, medical examiner office, or coroner's office) may apply directly to BJA for competitive funds. A state may apply through its SAA for competitive funds for forensic sciences improvements above and beyond those it can accomplish with its estimated amount of formula funds.

Statutory Authority

Pub. L. No. 90-351, Title I, Sec. 2801-2806 (codified at 34 U.S.C. 10561-10566); Any awards under this NOFO would be made under the statutory authority provided by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2025.

Agency Contact Information

For assistance with the requirements of this funding opportunity:

OJP Response Center

Phone: 800-851-3420 or 202-353-5556 (TTY for hearing-impaired callers only)

Email: OJP.ResponseCenter@usdoj.gov

Hours of operation: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time (ET) Monday–Friday

For assistance with **SAM.gov** (registration/renewal):

SAM.gov Help Desk

Phone: 866-606-8220

Web: [SAM.gov Help Desk \(Federal Service Desk\)](#)

Hours of operation: 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET Monday–Friday

For assistance with **Grants.gov** (registration, submission of the Application for Federal Assistance SF-424):

Grants.gov Customer Support Hotline

Phone: 800-518-4726, 606-545-5035

Email: support@grants.gov

Web: [Grants.gov Customer Support](#)

Hours of operation: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, except on federal holidays

For assistance with **JustGrants** (registration, submission of full application):

JustGrants Service Desk

Phone: 833-872-5175

Email: JustGrants.Support@usdoj.gov

Hours of operation: 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET Monday–Friday and 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. ET on Saturday, Sunday, and federal holidays.

For procedures related to unforeseen technical issues beyond the control of the applicant that impact submission by the deadlines, see [Experiencing Technical Issues Preventing Submission of an Application \(Technical Waivers\)](#).

Resources for Applying

[OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#): Referred to as the “Application Resource Guide” throughout the NOFO, this resource provides guidance to help applicants for OJP funding prepare and submit their applications.

[JustGrants Application Submission Training Webpage](#): Offers helpful information and resources on the grant application process.

Note: If this NOFO requires something different from any guidance provided in the [Application Resource Guide](#), the difference will be noted in this NOFO and the applicant should follow the guidance in this NOFO.



ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Applicants

The types of entities that are eligible to apply for this funding opportunity are listed below:

- **Government Entities**
 - State governments
 - County governments
 - City or township governments
 - Special district governments
 - Native American Tribal governments (federally recognized)
 - Native American Tribal governments (other than federally recognized)
- **Other**
 - Units of local government

Other Units of Local Government: For the purposes of this notice of funding opportunity, other units of local government include towns, boroughs, parishes, villages, or other general purpose political subdivisions of a state.

State Government Entities: For the purposes of this NOFO, “state” means any state of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Additional Applicant Eligibility Factors

States and units of local government may apply for FY25 Coverdell Competitive Program funds for use for forensic science laboratories (see the [Definitions](#) section for additional information on how “forensic science laboratory” is defined for the purposes of this NOFO).

States may be eligible for both formula and competitive funds. Units of local government within states may be eligible for competitive funds and may apply directly to BJA. This NOFO is ONLY for the competitive funds. Any state application for funding MUST be submitted by the Coverdell SAA (see a list of SAAs on the OJP website at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/saa/index.htm>). Other interested state agencies or departments must coordinate with their respective SAAs.

When applying for competitive funds, an SAA should consult with all interested state agencies to prepare a request for competitive funds. No more than one request for competitive funds per state (SAA) will be funded. If more than one request for competitive funds is made by the state, each should be submitted as a separate application in Grants.gov.

Unit of local government applicants. A unit of local government should consult all interested components before preparing an application for competitive funds. No more than one application for competitive funds per unit of local government will be funded. If more than one request for competitive funds is made by the unit of local government, each should be submitted as a separate application in Grants.gov. As part of the discussion of existing resources and current needs, applicants requesting competitive funds should include information in the

proposal narrative that describes any known, specific impact(s) on resources and needs indicated by Part 1 violent crime data (state data and any data reported by the applicant).

The Coverdell law (34 U.S.C. § 10562) requires that, to request a grant, an applicant for Coverdell funds **must submit**:

1. **A certification and description regarding a plan for forensic science laboratories ([state form](#) OR [unit of local government form](#)).** Each applicant must submit a certification that the state or unit of local government has developed a plan for forensic science laboratories under a program intended to improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science or medical examiner services in the state, including such services provided by the laboratories operated by the state and those operated by units of local government within the state. Applicants must also specifically describe the manner in which the grant will be used to carry out that plan.
2. **A certification regarding use of [generally accepted laboratory practices](#).** Each applicant must submit a certification that any forensic laboratory system, medical examiner's office, or coroner's office in the state, including any laboratory operated by a unit of local government within the state, that will receive any portion of the grant amount (whether directly or through a subgrant) uses generally accepted laboratory practices and procedures established by accrediting organizations or appropriate certifying bodies.
3. **A certification regarding [forensic science laboratory accreditation](#).** Each applicant must submit a certification that any forensic science laboratory system in the state, including any laboratory operated by a unit of local government within the state, that will receive any portion of the grant amount (whether directly or through a subgrant) either is accredited or is not so accredited, but will (or will be required in a legally binding and enforceable writing to) use a portion of the grant amount to prepare and apply for such accreditation not more than 2 years after the date on which a grant is awarded under the FY 2025 Coverdell Program.

NOTE: Applicants requesting funds for only medical examiner or coroner's offices are not required to submit this certification. See 34 U.S.C. § 10562(2).

4. **A certification and description regarding [costs of new facilities](#).** Each applicant must submit a certification that the amount of the grant used for the costs of any new facility constructed as part of a program to improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science or medical examiner services will not exceed certain limitations set forth in the Coverdell law at 34 U.S.C. § 10564(c). (See information on "permissible expenses" in Federal Award Information.) Applicants must also specifically describe any new facility to be constructed, as well as the estimated costs of the facility.

NOTE: Applicants must submit this certification even if no new facilities are being constructed.

5. **A certification regarding [external investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct](#) and [the External Investigations Attachment Template](#).** Each applicant must submit a certification that "a government entity exists and an appropriate process is in place to conduct independent external investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct substantially affecting the integrity of the forensic results committed by employees or contractors of any forensic laboratory

system, medical examiner office, coroner's office, law enforcement storage facility, or medical facility in the state that will receive a portion of the grant amount." In connection with the certification regarding external investigations (described above), applicants must provide, prior to receiving award funds, the name(s) of the existing government entity (or government entities). This information is to be provided as an attachment to the proposal narrative section of the application using [the External Investigations Attachment Template](#).

Applicants are expected to carefully review the requirements of each certification before determining whether the certification may be properly made. Any certification that is submitted must be executed by an official who is both familiar with the requirements of the certification and authorized to make the certification on behalf of the applicant agency (that is, the agency applying directly to BJA). **Certifications must be submitted using the templates provided.**

Certifications made on behalf of subrecipients of award funds—rather than certifications made on behalf of the agency applying directly to BJA—are not acceptable to satisfy the certification requirements and should not be submitted.

Please note that funds will not be made available to applicant agencies that fail to provide the necessary information.

Important Note on Referrals in Connection with Allegations of Serious Negligence or Misconduct

The highest standards of integrity in the practice of forensic science are critical to the enhancement of the administration of justice. BJA assumes that recipients (and subrecipients) of Coverdell funds will make use of the process referenced in their certification as to external investigations and will refer allegations of serious negligence or misconduct substantially affecting the integrity of forensic results to government entities with an appropriate process in place to conduct independent external investigations, such as the government entities identified in the grant application.

For **each fiscal year** of an award made under this NOFO, recipients will be required to report to BJA on an annual basis:

- The number and nature of any such allegations.
- Information on the referrals of such allegations (e.g., the government entity or entities to which referred, the date of referral).
- The outcome of such referrals (if known as of the date of the report).
- If any such allegations were not referred, the reason(s) for the nonreferral.
- Payments to recipients (including payments under future awards) may be withheld if the required information is not submitted on a timely basis.

This information must be included as an attachment to the semi-annual performance report that is due on January 30 of each year. Payments to recipients (including payments under future awards) may be withheld if the required information is not submitted on a timely basis., each year.

Special Guidance on Certification Regarding External Investigations into Allegations of Serious Negligence or Misconduct

The certification regarding external investigations has a number of requirements, each of which must be satisfied before the certification may be made. The official authorized to make the certification on behalf of the applicant agency must carefully review each of the statutory elements and this guidance before determining whether a certification properly may be made.

After reviewing the information and guidance provided here, the official, on behalf of the applicant agency, must determine whether:

1. A government entity exists
2. with an appropriate process in place
3. to conduct independent, external investigations
4. into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct
5. substantially affecting the integrity of the forensic results
6. committed by employees or contractors
7. of any forensic laboratory system, medical examiner's office, coroner's office, law enforcement storage facility, or medical facility in the state that will receive a portion of the grant amount.

Note: In making this certification, the certifying official is certifying that these requirements are satisfied not only with respect to the applicant itself, but also with respect to each entity that will receive a portion of the grant amount. Certifying officials are advised that:

1. A false statement in the certification or in the grant application that it supports may be the subject of criminal prosecution, including under 18 U.S.C. § 1001 and/or 1621 and 34 U.S.C. §§ 10271-10273.
2. OJP grants, including certifications provided in connection with such grants, are subject to review by OJP and/or DOJ's Office of the Inspector General.

Limit on Number of Applications

An applicant may submit more than one application if each application proposes a different project in response to the NOFO. Also, an entity may be proposed as a subrecipient in more than one application.

Applications under which two or more entities (project partners) would carry out the federal award will be considered. However, only one entity may be the applicant for the NOFO; any others must be proposed as subrecipients. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information on subawards.

Cost Sharing/Match Requirement

This NOFO does **not** require cost sharing/match.



PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

General Purpose of the Funding

This NOFO provides competitive funding under the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program (the Coverdell Program), which awards grants to states and units of local government to help improve forensic science and medical examiner/coroner services. Under the Coverdell Program, State Administering Agencies (SAAs) may apply for both formula and competitive funds. Units of local government may apply for competitive funds. This NOFO is only for competitive funds. A state or unit of local government that receives a Coverdell grant must use the grant for one or more of the following six objectives:

1. To carry out all or a substantial part of a program intended to improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services in the state, including those services provided by laboratories operated by the state and those operated by units of local government within the state.
2. To eliminate a backlog in the analysis of forensic science evidence, including, among other things, a backlog with respect to firearms examination, latent prints, impression evidence, toxicology, digital evidence, fire evidence, controlled substances, forensic pathology, questioned documents, and trace evidence.
3. To train, assist, and employ forensic laboratory personnel and medicolegal death investigators, as needed, to eliminate such a backlog.
4. To address emerging forensic science issues (such as statistics, contextual bias, and uncertainty of measurement) and emerging forensic science technology (such as high throughput automation, statistical software, and new types of instrumentation).
5. To educate and train forensic pathologists.
6. To fund medicolegal death investigation systems to facilitate accreditation of medical examiner and coroner offices and certification of medicolegal death investigators.

Important Note: Congress has appropriated funding to help the forensic science community address the specific challenges crime laboratories are confronting related to the proliferation of opioids and synthetic drugs. To address these issues, BJA plans to allocate approximately 59 percent of available funds to specifically target the challenges that opioids and synthetic drugs have brought to the forensic science community.

As described above in the Eligibility section, the Coverdell law provides that, to request a grant, each applicant must submit **five** certifications specific to the Coverdell Program. (Applicants requesting funds for only medical examiner's offices or coroner's offices are not required to submit the certification regarding accreditation. (See 34 U.S.C. § 10562(2).)

Funding awarded under the Coverdell Program may not be used for research. However, applicants may address emerging forensic science issues and technology through implementation of new technologies and processes into public laboratories. Agencies are also encouraged to participate in the [National Forensic Laboratory Information System \(NFLIS\)](#). NFLIS is a program of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Diversion Control Division

that systematically collects drug identification results and associated information from drug cases submitted to and analyzed by participating federal, state, and local forensic laboratories with drug chemistry sections. The program consists of three components (Drug, Toxicology, and Medical Examiner/Coroner) that complement each other to provide a holistic picture of the drugs analyzed by the U.S. forensic community. Data is submitted on a voluntary basis and agencies are encouraged to seek participation from any labs used for outsourcing in an effort to strengthen the understanding of drug mortality, novel psychoactive substances, drug frequency trends, levels of drugs involved in cause of death, and laboratory or office methods and practices.

Applicants should refer to [Application Contents, Submission Requirements, and Deadlines: Budget Detail Form](#) for information on allowable and unallowable costs that may inform the development of their project design.

Definitions

For the purposes of this NOFO, the following are defined:

- **Backlog:** A backlog in the analysis of forensic science evidence exists if such evidence:
 - Has been stored in a laboratory, medical examiner's office, coroner's office, law enforcement storage facility, or medical facility.
 - Has not been subjected to all appropriate forensic testing because of a lack of resources or personnel.
- **Forensic Science Laboratory:** Any state/local government entity performing forensic science services is considered a "forensic science laboratory." Medical examiner and coroner offices are considered to be forensic science laboratories for the purposes of this NOFO.
- **Research:** A systematic investigation—including research development, testing, and evaluation—designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. Validation of established technologies for implementation in a laboratory setting is not considered research for the purposes of this NOFO.
- **Accreditation:** A formal process by which an impartial entity reviews the policies and procedures of an organization to ensure its operations are consistent with national or international standards. Accreditation assesses a forensic laboratory's capacity to generate and interpret results in a particular forensic discipline and helps to ensure an ongoing compliance to industry and applicable international standards.

Notice Regarding DNA Testing

All traditional (e.g., nongenetic genealogy) DNA analyses conducted using program funds must be performed by a laboratory (government-owned or fee-for-service) that is accredited, undergoes external audits at least once every 2 years, and demonstrates compliance with the applicable DNA Quality Assurance Standards established by the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. All DNA analyses conducted, and profiles generated during the testing portion of this program must be maintained pursuant to all applicable federal privacy requirements, including those described in 34 U.S.C. § 12592(b)(3).

Program activity involving Forensic Genetic Genealogical DNA Analysis and Searching (FGGS) is subject to the [DOJ Interim Policy on Forensic Genetic Genealogical DNA Analysis and](#)

[Searching](#) or the final policy, when issued. See the “Performance Measures” section for additional required grantee reporting on FGGS activities.

Agency Funding Priorities

In order to advance public safety and help meet its mission, OJP will provide priority consideration to applicants that propose (as applicable within the scope of this funding opportunity) projects designed to advance the goals listed below. Applicants seeking priority consideration should specify in the proposal narrative (and in the budget detail form, if applicable) which of the following goal(s) the project is intended to advance and how it will do so:

- a) Directly supporting law enforcement operations (including immigration law enforcement operations);
- b) Combatting violent crime;
- c) Supporting services to American citizens;
- d) Protection of American children; and
- e) Support of American victims of trafficking and sexual assault.

Note: Addressing these priority areas is one of many factors that OJP considers in making funding decisions. Receiving priority consideration for one or more priority areas does not guarantee a funding award.

Unallowable Uses of Funds

The following are certain unallowable costs and certain activities that are out of the program scope and will not be funded.

1. Out of program scope is any program or activity, at any tier that, directly or indirectly, violates (or promotes or facilitates the violation of) federal immigration law (including 8 U.S.C. § 1373) or impedes or hinders the enforcement of federal immigration law—including by failing to comply with 8 U.S.C. § 1373, give access to DHS agents, or honor DHS requests and provide requested notice to DHS agents.
2. Out of program scope is any program or activity, at any tier that violates any applicable Federal civil rights or nondiscrimination law. This includes violations that (1) indirectly violate the law, including by promoting or facilitating violations; or (2) unlawfully favor individuals in any race or protected group, including on a majority or minority, or privileged or unprivileged, basis, within a given area, population, or sector.
3. As specified in the [DOJ Grants Financial Guide](#), in Chapter 3.13 “Unallowable Costs” (“Legal Services for Aliens”), any obligations of funds, at any tier, under this award to provide (or to support the provision of) legal services to any removable alien or any alien otherwise unlawfully present in the United States shall be unallowable costs for purposes any award made under this notice, but the foregoing shall not be understood to apply: (1) to legal services to obtain protection orders for victims of crime; or (2) to immigration-related legal services that may be expressly authorized or required by any law, or any judicial ruling, governing or applicable to the award.

Program Goals and Objectives

The goal of Coverdell Program grants to applicant states is to demonstrate improvement over current operations in forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services provided in the state, including services provided by laboratories operated by the state and services provided by laboratories operated by units of local government within the state. Reduction in forensic analysis backlogs is considered an improvement in timeliness of services.

The goal of Coverdell Program grants made directly to units of local government is to demonstrate improvement over current operations in forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services provided by the local jurisdiction.

Goal 1: Improve quality of forensic science services.

Objective 1: To carry out all or a substantial part of a program intended to improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services in the state, including those services provided by laboratories operated by the state and those operated by units of local government within the state.

Objective 2: To address emerging forensic science issues (such as statistics, contextual bias, and uncertainty of measurement) and emerging forensic science technology (such as high throughput automation, statistical software, and new types of instrumentation).

Objective 3: To educate and train forensic pathologists.

Objective 4: To fund medicolegal death investigation systems to facilitate accreditation of medical examiner and coroner offices and certification of medicolegal death investigators.

Goal 2: Improve timeliness of forensic science services.

Objective 1: To eliminate a backlog in the analysis of forensic science evidence, including, among other things, a backlog with respect to firearms examination, latent prints, impression evidence, toxicology, digital evidence, fire evidence, controlled substances, forensic pathology, questioned documents, and trace evidence.

Objective 2: To train, assist, and employ forensic laboratory personnel and medicolegal death investigators, as needed, to eliminate such a backlog.

How Awards Will Contribute to Program Goals/Objectives

Coverdell awards will improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services in the state, including those services provided by laboratories operated by the state and those operated by units of local government within the state.

Expected Outcomes: Deliverables and Performance Measures

To achieve the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity, OJP has identified expected deliverables that must be produced by a recipient. OJP has also identified performance measures (pieces of data) that will indicate how a recipient is achieving the performance goals and objectives previously identified. Recipients will need to collect and report this performance measure data to OJP.

OJP will measure success by reviewing a recipient's submission of performance reports and data and the extent to which project implementation reflects progress toward the goals and objectives of this NOFO.

Deliverables

Recipients under this funding opportunity will not need to submit any deliverables other than the standard [Post-Award Requirements and Administration](#).

Performance Measures

OJP will require each award recipient to submit regular performance reports that communicate progress toward achieving the goals and objectives identified in [Program Goals and Objectives](#). Applicants can visit [OJP's performance measurement page](#) at ojp.gov/performance for more information on performance measurement activities.

A list of performance measure questions for this NOFO can be found at [Coverdell Competitive performance measures](#).

Funding Instrument

OJP expects to make awards under this funding opportunity as grants. See the [Administrative, National Policy, and Other Legal Requirements](#) section of the [Application Resource Guide](#) for a brief discussion of important statutes, regulations, and award conditions.



APPLICATION CONTENTS, SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS, AND DEADLINES

This NOFO contains all the information needed to apply for this funding opportunity. The application for this funding opportunity is submitted through web-based forms and attachments in Grants.gov and JustGrants through the steps that follow.

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and SAM.gov Registration

To submit an application, an applicant must have an active registration in the [System for Award Management \(SAM.gov\)](#). SAM.gov assigns entities a unique entity identifier (UEI) that is required for the entity to apply for federal funding. Applicants will enter their UEI with their application. Award recipients must then maintain an active UEI for the duration of their award's period of performance.

First-time Registration: Entities registering in SAM.gov for the first time will submit information about their entity type and structure, financial information (such as dates of the fiscal year, banking information, and executive compensation), entity points of contact, and other information. The information is reviewed and verified by SAM.gov, and then a UEI is issued. This process may take several weeks, so entities considering applying for funding should begin the registration process as soon as possible.

Renewing an Existing Registration: Entities must renew their SAM.gov registration every 12 months to keep it active. If an entity does not renew their SAM.gov registration, it will expire. An expired registration can delay or prevent the submission of an application for funding in Grants.gov and JustGrants.

Applicants are encouraged to start the SAM.gov registration or renewal process **at least 30 days prior to the application's Grants.gov deadline**. Applicants who fail to begin the registration or renewal process at least 10 business days prior to the Grants.gov deadline may not be able to complete the process in time and will not be considered for a technical waiver that allows for late submission.

Submission Instructions: Summary

Applications must be submitted to DOJ electronically through a two-step process that begins in Grants.gov and is completed in JustGrants. See [Basic Information: Key Dates and Times](#) for the Grants.gov and JustGrants application deadlines.

- **Step 1:** The applicant must submit the required [Application for Federal Assistance SF-424](#) by the Grants.gov deadline.
- **Step 2:** The applicant must submit the full application, including attachments, through JustGrants by the deadline (see [JusticeGrants.usdoj.gov](#)).

Submission Step 1: Grants.gov Submission of SF-424

Access/Registration

If the applicant does not already have a Grants.gov account, they will need to register for this opportunity in Grants.gov. Applicants should follow the Grants.gov [Quick Start Guide for](#)

[Applicants](#) to register, create a workspace, assign roles, submit an application, and troubleshoot issues.

Submission of the SF-424

Applicants will begin the application process in Grants.gov with the submission of the SF-424, which collects the applicant's name, address, and UEI; the funding opportunity number; and proposed project title, among other information. The SF-424 must be signed by the Grants.gov Authorized Organizational Representative for the applicant.

See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information on completing the SF-424.

Section 8F – Applicant Point of Contact: Please include the name and contact information of the individual **who will complete the application in JustGrants**. JustGrants will use this information (*i.e.*, email address) to assign the application to this user in JustGrants.

Section 19 – Intergovernmental Review: This funding opportunity is subject to [Executive Order \(E.O.\) 12372](#) (Intergovernmental Review). States that participate in the Intergovernmental Review process have an opportunity to review the applicant's submission. An applicant may find the names and addresses of state Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) for Intergovernmental Review at the following website: <https://www.ojp.gov/IntergovernmentalReviewSPOCList.pdf>. If the applicant's state appears on the SPOC list, the applicant must contact its SPOC to find out about, and comply with, the state's process under E.O. 12372. On the SF-424, an applicant whose state appears on the SPOC list must make the appropriate selection in response to question 19 once the applicant has complied with its state E.O. 12372 process. An applicant whose state does not appear on the SPOC list should answer question 19 by selecting, "Program is subject to E.O. 12372 but has not been selected by the state for review."

An applicant should submit the SF-424 as early as possible and recommended not later than 48 hours before the Grants.gov deadline. If an applicant fails to submit the SF-424 in Grants.gov by the deadline, they will be unable to submit their application in JustGrants.

Once the first part of the application has been successfully submitted in Grants.gov, the Grants.gov Workspace status will change from "In Progress" to "Submitted." Applicants will also receive a series of four Grants.gov email notifications. Refer to the [DOJ Application Submission Checklist](#) for additional details.

If an applicant needs to update information in the SF-424 after it is submitted in Grants.gov, they can update the information as part of their JustGrants submission (see [Application Contents, Submission Requirements, and Deadlines: Standard Applicant Information](#)). They do not need to submit an update in Grants.gov.

Submission Step 2: JustGrants Submission of Full Application

Access/Registration

For first-time JustGrants applicants, once the application is received from Grants.gov, DOJ will send an email (from DIAMD-NoReply@usdoj.gov) to the email address listed in Section 8F of the SF-424 with instructions on how to create a JustGrants account. This email should arrive within 24 hours after confirmation from Grants.gov of the SF-424 submission.

Creating and setting up a JustGrants account consists of three steps:

1. Follow the instructions in the email to first confirm who will be the Entity Administrator (the person who manages which staff can access JustGrants on behalf of the applicant).
2. Log in to JustGrants and confirm the information in the Entity Profile.
3. Invite other individuals who will serve as the Application Submitter and the Authorized Representative for the applicant to register for JustGrants.

These steps should be completed in JustGrants as early as possible and recommended not later than 48 hours before the JustGrants deadline. Once registered in JustGrants, the Application Submitter will receive a link in an email to complete the rest of the application in JustGrants. Applicants can find additional information on JustGrants registration in the [DOJ Grant Application Submission Checklist](#).

Preparing for Submission

Some of the required sections of the application will be entered directly into JustGrants, and other sections will require documents to be uploaded and attached. Therefore, applicants should allow enough time before the JustGrants deadline to prepare, enter, and upload all the requirements of the application.

Applicants may save their application in the system and add to or change the application as needed prior to hitting the “Submit” button at the end of the application in JustGrants. Once the application is submitted, no changes or additions can be made to the application. **OJP recommends that applicants submit the complete application package in JustGrants at least 48 hours prior to the JustGrants deadline.**

For additional information, including file name and type requirements, see the “How To Apply” section in the [Application Resource Guide](#) and the [Application Attachment Tips](#) resource.

Standard Applicant Information

The Standard Applicant Information section of the JustGrants application is pre-populated with the SF-424 data submitted in Grants.gov. The applicant will need to review the Standard Applicant Information in JustGrants and can make whatever edits are needed. Within this section, the applicant will need to add ZIP codes for areas affected by the project; confirm their Authorized Representative; and confirm the organization’s unique entity identifier, legal name, and address.

Proposal Abstract

A proposal abstract (no more than 2,000 characters) summarizing the proposed project must be completed in the JustGrants web-based form. The text from abstracts will be made publicly available on the OJP.gov and USASpending.gov websites if the project is awarded, so this section of the application should not contain any personally identifiable information (e.g., the name of the project director).

The abstract should be in paragraph form without bullets or tables and written in the third person (e.g., they, the community, their, themselves, rather than I or we). The abstract should include the following information:

- The name of the applicant’s proposed project.
- The purpose of the proposed project (i.e., what the project will do and why it is necessary).

- Who will be served by the project (i.e., who will be helped or have their needs addressed by the project).
- What activities will be carried out to complete the project.
- The subrecipient(s)/partner organizations or entities, if known.
- Deliverables and expected outcomes (i.e., what the project will achieve).
- An outline limited to the scope of the FY25 Coverdell Competitive Program.

See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for an [example](#) of a proposal abstract.

Data Requested With Application

Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire (including Applicant Disclosure of High-Risk Status)

The Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire helps OJP assess what financial management and internal control systems the applicant has in place, whether these systems would be sufficient to maintain a funding award, and the associated potential risks of an applicant as part of the pre-award risk assessment process. Every OJP applicant (other than an individual applying in their personal capacity, not representing an applicant organization) is required to complete the web-based form in JustGrants. See the [Application Resource Guide: Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire \(including Applicant Disclosure of High-Risk Status\)](#) for additional guidance on how to complete the questionnaire.

Agency Funding Priorities Inventory

Applicants should complete the Agency Funding Priorities Inventory to indicate whether they are seeking priority consideration based on any of the items listed in the [Agency Funding Priorities](#) section, and if so, which priority(ies) their project will address.

Proposal Narrative

The proposal narrative must specifically describe the manner in which Coverdell grant funds will be used to carry out the applicant's plan to improve forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services over current operations. (Reduction of forensic analysis backlogs is considered an improvement in timeliness of services.)

If grant funds are requested to cover the costs of a new facility, the proposal narrative must specifically describe the new facility to be constructed and the estimated costs of that facility.

State applicants. A state that seeks competitive funds should describe how competitive funds will be used to support improvements in forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services above and beyond the improvements it will accomplish with its estimated amount of formula funds. States are expected to consider the needs of laboratories operated by units of local government as well as those operated by the state. Existing resources and current needs will be considered in awarding competitive funds and should be addressed in any request for competitive funds.

As part of the discussion of existing resources and current needs, applicants should include information in the proposal narrative that describes any known specific impact(s) on resources and needs indicated by the applicant state's Part 1 violent crime data.

Any state application for funding MUST be submitted by the Coverdell SAA (see list of SAAs on the OJP website at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/saa/index.htm>). When applying for competitive funds, an SAA should consult with all interested state agencies to prepare a request for competitive funds. No more than one request for competitive funds per state (SAA) will be funded. If more than one request for competitive funds is made by the state, each should be submitted as a separate application in Grants.gov.

Unit of local government applicants. A unit of local government should consult all interested components before preparing an application for competitive funds. No more than one application for competitive funds per unit of local government will be funded. If more than one request for competitive funds is made by the unit of local government, each should be submitted as a separate application in Grants.gov. As part of the discussion of existing resources and current needs, applicants requesting competitive funds should include information in the proposal narrative that describes any known, specific impact(s) on resources and needs indicated by Part 1 violent crime data (state data and any data reported by the applicant).

Accreditation: If grant funds are requested for accreditation, the proposal narrative must describe the accreditation activities and plans and, as applicable, the projected schedule for preparation and application for accreditation. Under the Coverdell Program, any forensic science laboratory system, including any laboratory operated by a unit of local government within the state, that is not accredited (as set out in the Coverdell law) and that will receive a portion of the grant amount must use a portion of the grant amount to prepare and apply for accreditation not more than 2 years after the date of the Coverdell grant award. For purposes of this NOFO, see definition of “forensic science laboratory” under [Definitions](#) in the Program Description section.

Format of the Proposal Narrative: The Proposal Narrative will be submitted as an attachment in JustGrants. The attached document should be double-spaced, using a standard 12-point size font; have no less than 1-inch margins; have numbered pages; and should not exceed 20 pages. If the Proposal Narrative does not comply with these restrictions, OJP may consider such noncompliance in peer review and in final award decisions. Tables, charts, references and other relevant materials may be submitted as an appendix to the proposal narrative if needed and will not count toward the page limit.

Sections of the Proposal Narrative: The Proposal Narrative must include the four sections listed below. If the applicant seeks priority consideration, the Proposal Narrative must state which priority goal(s) the applicant’s project will advance and describe how (see section Agency Funding Priorities under Program Description).

1. Description of the Need: What critical issue or problem is the applicant proposing to address with this project? Please include:

- A brief explanation of the need, gap, or issue to be addressed by the proposed project.
- Supporting information, data, or evidence to demonstrate the need’s existence, size, and impact on the target population and community.
- How the need relates to the purpose of the NOFO.
- Describe the challenges faced in providing forensic and/or medical examiner/coroner services in the jurisdiction.

- Outline the average annual number of Part I violent crimes reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for calendar years 2021, 2022, and 2023 by the state (and for applicant units of local government, the local data, if available) and include a discussion of the impact on the laboratory's resources and needs based on the reported data.

2. Project Goals and Objectives: How will the proposed project address the need identified and address the purpose of the NOFO? Please include:

- Project goals (goals are broad, visionary statements on what the applicant hopes to accomplish).
- Project objectives (objectives are specific outcomes the applicant plans to achieve through project activities).
- How the applicant's goals and objectives relate to the goals and objectives of the NOFO.
- Which specific Coverdell goal and objective the applicant proposes to achieve.

3. Project Design and Implementation: How will the applicant implement project activities that meet the goals and objectives? Please include:

- What activities the applicant will conduct to achieve the proposed goals and objectives.
- How the applicant will deliver or complete those activities.
- When the activities will take place and likelihood that the desired goals will be achieved within the proposed period of performance.
- Demonstrate the soundness of the approach to improve forensic services. Specifically outline the impact the proposed project will have on laboratory operations and/or forensic science discipline.
- Who in the applicant's organization will staff the activities, including key staff.
- Who will participate in and benefit from the activity.
- What deliverables, reports, and other items will be produced as part of the project.
- If the applicant plans to use subrecipients to help conduct the project, please name them (if they are known) or describe how the applicant will identify them. Please describe their role in conducting project activities.
- Describe a sustainability plan, as relevant, for activities once the award has completed. A non-exhaustive list of examples may include a plan for annual maintenance following purchase of new instrumentation, hand-off of activities assigned to grant funded staff, validation of newly purchased instrumentation, and plan for continued casework following outsourcing.

4. Capabilities and Competencies: What administrative and technical capacity and expertise does the applicant bring to successfully complete this project? Please include:

- A short description of the applicant's capacity to deliver the proposed project and meet the requirements of the award, including collecting and reporting the required performance measure data. Who will be responsible for this task, and how will the applicant collect the data? Refer to [Program Description: Performance Measures](#) for additional details on performance measures for this funding opportunity.
- Information demonstrating an understanding of the [Coverdell Competitive performance measures](#), the specific section(s) that are relevant to the proposed project, and the plans for collecting said data.

- A description of projects or activities the applicant organization has conducted, or is currently conducting, that demonstrate the applicant's ability to undertake the proposed project activities.
- A summary of relevant experience of team members with key responsibilities for implementing the project.

Project Evaluations: An applicant that proposes to use award funds to conduct project evaluations must follow the guidance in the [“Note on Project Evaluations”](#) section in the [Application Resource Guide](#).

Budget and Associated Documentation: Budget Detail Form

The applicant will complete the JustGrants budget detail form. The form collects the individual costs under each cost category needed to implement the proposed project. Applicants should ensure that the name/description of each cost is clear and provide the detailed calculation (e.g., cost per unit and number of units) for the total cost. Applicants should enter additional narrative, as needed, to fully describe the cost calculations and connection to the project goals and objectives (including, if applicable, describing connections to OJP priority goals).

Permissible Expenses

The following list details the types of expenses allowed under the Coverdell Program. These expenses should NOT be used as budget categories—instead they are to be incorporated into the appropriate standard OJP budget categories. For more information on OJP's standard budget format, see the section titled Application Review.

- **Salary and benefits of laboratory employees.** Funds may be used for forensic science or medical examiner/coroner office personnel, fellowships, visiting scientists, interns, consultants, or temporary staff.
- **Overtime for laboratory staff.** Funds may be used to pay overtime for laboratory scientists (excluding executive personnel) to directly examine, analyze, and interpret physical and/or digital evidence in criminal matters. Any payments for overtime must be in accordance with the applicable provisions of the DOJ Financial Guide.
- **Computerization.** Funds may be used to upgrade, replace, lease, or purchase computer hardware and software for forensic analyses and data management.
- **Laboratory equipment.** Funds may be used to upgrade, lease, or purchase forensic laboratory or medical examiner/coroner office equipment and instrumentation.
- **Supplies.** Funds may be used to acquire forensic laboratory or medical examiner/coroner office supplies.
- **Accreditation.** Funds may be used to prepare for laboratory accreditation by the ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB), the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME), the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA), the International Association of Coroners & Medical Examiners (IAC&ME), or other appropriate accrediting bodies for forensic science and/or medicolegal death investigation. Funds may also be used for application and maintenance fees charged by appropriate accrediting bodies. Per 34 U.S.C. §10562(2), such an accrediting body must be “an accrediting body that is a signatory to an internationally recognized arrangement and that offers accreditation to forensic science conformity assessment bodies using an

accreditation standard that is recognized by that internationally recognized arrangement.”

An applicant that proposes to use any portion of the grant amount to fund a forensic science laboratory system, including any laboratory operated by a unit of local government within the state, that is not accredited (as set out in the Coverdell law) will be required to use (or, as applicable, must require any unaccredited subrecipient forensic science laboratory system to use) a portion of the grant amount for accreditation purposes. Coverdell awardees must use grant funds to prepare and apply for accreditation of any FY25 Coverdell grant-funded unaccredited forensic laboratory system, including any laboratory operated by a unit of local government within the state, not more than 2 years after the FY25 Coverdell award date.

- **Education, training, and certification.** Funds may be used for appropriate internal and external training of staff that are involved directly and substantially in providing forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services. In appropriate cases, funds also may be used for fees charged by appropriate certifying bodies for certification of staff in specific forensic discipline areas. All education, training, and certification activities must be designed to improve forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services. The grant application should demonstrate that the proposed training or certification is directly related to the job position and duties of the individual(s) receiving the training or seeking certification. OJP recognizes the benefit of attending discipline-related conferences to receive training and/or education, however, it is recommended that the applicant consider the cost-effectiveness of this option compared to other viable modes of training. For example, hosting onsite training or attending a local program may be more suitable for the applicant’s personnel and organization.
- **Facilities.** Funds may be used for program expenses related to facilities, provided that the expenses are directly attributable to improving forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services. Funds may also be used for renovation and/or construction undertaken as part of the applicant’s program to improve forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services.
- **Limitations on use of funds for costs of new facility.** The Coverdell law limits the amount of funds that may be used for the costs of a new facility or facilities (34 U.S.C. § 10564(c)). Maximum amounts are determined by the total amount of the Coverdell grants received (including both formula and competitive funds) and the total amount of funds available for Coverdell grants nationwide. The maximum amounts that may be used for costs of new facilities are as follows below. Note that estimates and calculations are based on the assumption that the total available funds for Coverdell awards in FY25 (Formula and Competitive) will be \$28,754,088. Please refer to the discussion under Available Funding.

Grants that exceed 0.6 percent of the total available funds. If an applicant state receives grants whose total amount exceeds 0.6 percent of the total available funds (estimated here at \$172,525), the amount of the grant that can be used for the costs of any new facility cannot exceed the sum of 80 percent of 0.6 percent of the total available funds (such 80 percent estimated here at \$138,020) plus 40 percent of the amount of the grant in excess of 0.6 percent of the total available funds. For example, if \$28,754,088 were to become available for Coverdell awards in FY25 and a state were to receive a total

Coverdell grant of \$287,541, no more than \$184,026 may be used for the costs of any new facility.

A sample calculation for a \$287,541 grant would be as follows:

Eighty percent of 0.6 percent of the total available funds: $\$172,525 \times .80 = \$138,020$

Amount in excess of \$287,541: $\$287,541 - \$172,525 = \$115,016$

Forty percent of amount in excess of \$287,541: $\$115,016 \times .40 = \$46,007$

Sum of $\$138,020 + \$46,007 = \$184,026$

Estimates and calculations are based on the assumption that the total available funds for ALL Coverdell awards (formula and competitive) in FY25 will be \$28,754,088.

- **Administrative expenses.** Not more than 10 percent of the total amount of a Coverdell grant may be used for a recipient's administrative expenses.

Program activity involving forensic genetic genealogical DNA analysis and searching (FGGS) is subject to the DOJ [Interim Policy on Forensic Genetic Genealogical DNA Analysis and Searching](#) or to the final policy, when issued. See Performance Measures for additional required grantee reporting on FGGS activities.

Note on the use of funds to address opioid- and synthetic drug-related challenges: The application should demonstrate, wherever applicable, how any proposed use of funds would address challenges that opioids and/or synthetic drugs have brought to the forensic science community, as described in the "Important Note" under "Objectives" in the Program Description. To facilitate this, an applicant should annotate each line item in the budget as "opioid- and/or synthetic drug-related" (addressing the opioid and/or synthetic drug crisis) or "non-opioid- or synthetic drug-related." Coverdell funds are available for permissible uses that would not address the opioid and synthetic drug related challenges. However, applications requesting Coverdell funds for projects that address specified opioid and synthetic drug related challenges to the forensic science community will be given priority consideration in award decisions over applications not requesting funds for such projects.

Expenses That Are Not Permitted

1. **Funds to conduct research**, although applicants may address emerging forensic science issues and technology through implementation of new technologies and processes into public laboratories.
2. **Expenses other than those listed above** (including expenses for general law enforcement functions or non-forensic investigatory functions).
3. Costs that exceed the limits described above for any new facility.
4. **Recipient administrative expenses** (direct or indirect) that exceed 10 percent of the total grant amount.
5. The use of funds for the **purchase and/or lease of vehicles**, such as crime scene vans.

All recipients and subrecipients (including any for-profit organization) must forgo any profit or management fee.

Budget proposals should include the funding needed to implement the proposed activities. In preparing their budget proposals, applicants should consider what types of costs are allowable, if awarded funding. Costs are allowable when they are reasonable, allocable to, and necessary for the performance of the project funded under the federal award and when they comply with the funding statute and agency requirements, including the conditions of the award and the cost principles set out in [2 C.F.R. Part 200, Subpart E](#) and the [DOJ Grants Financial Guide](#).

Costs Associated With a Conference/Meeting/Training: An applicant that proposes to use award funds for activities related to a conference, meeting, training, or similar event should review the [Application Resource Guide](#) for information on prior approval, planning, and reporting costs for a conference/meeting/training.

Costs Associated With Language Assistance and Access: If an applicant proposes a program or activity that would deliver services or benefits to individuals, the costs of taking reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to those services or benefits for individuals with limited English proficiency may be allowable in specific grant programs. Costs to provide reasonable accommodation and facilitate language access for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may also be allowable in specific grant programs. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for information on costs associated with language assistance.

For additional information about how to prepare a budget for federal funding, see the [Application Resource Guide](#) section on “[Budget Preparation and Submission Information](#)” and the technical steps to complete the budget form in JustGrants in the [Complete the Application in JustGrants: Budget](#) training.

Budget and Associated Documentation: Budget/Financial Attachments

Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable): An applicant with a current, federally approved indirect cost rate agreement should upload it as an attachment in JustGrants.

Indirect costs are costs of an organization that are not readily assignable to a particular project but are necessary for the operation of the organization and the performance of the project. Examples of costs usually treated as indirect include those incurred for operation and maintenance of offices or workspaces and salaries of administrative or support staff. The requirements for the development and submission of indirect cost proposals and cost allocation plans are listed in Appendices III–VII of 2 C.F.R. Part 200. A non-federal applicant should follow the guidelines applicable to its type of organization. See the [DOJ Grants Financial Guide](#) and the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information on indirect cost rate agreements.

Consultant Rate (if applicable): OJP has established maximum rates for consultants; see the “Listing of Costs Requiring Prior Approval” section of the [DOJ Grants Financial Guide](#) for more information. If an applicant proposes a rate for a consultant on their project that is higher than the established maximum rate and receives an award, then the award recipient must submit a document requesting approval for the rate and cannot incur costs at the higher rate without prior OJP approval. The award recipient must provide justification for why the proposed rate is higher than the established maximum rate, such as why the rate is reasonable and consistent with that paid for similar services in the marketplace.

Limitation on Use of Award Funds for Employee Compensation for Awards Over

\$250,000; Waiver (if applicable): If an applicant proposes to hire employees with federal award

funds, for any award of more than \$250,000, the recipient may not use federal funds to pay total cash compensation (salary plus cash bonuses) to any employee of the recipient at a rate that exceeds 110 percent of the maximum annual salary payable to a member of the federal government's Senior Executive Service (SES) at an agency with a Certified SES Performance Appraisal System for that year. Applicants may request a waiver from this requirement by submitting the appropriate form. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for information on the "Limitation on Use of Award Funds for Employee Compensation for Awards over \$250,000; Waiver."

Disclosure of Process Related to Executive Compensation (if applicable): This notice of funding opportunity expressly modifies the Application Resource Guide by not incorporating its "Disclosure of Process Related to Executive Compensation" provisions. Applicants to this funding opportunity are not required to provide this disclosure.

Additional Application Components

Potential Environmental Impact: The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (Public Law No. 90-190; 42 U.S.C. § 4371, et seq.) established a national policy to promote the protection and enhancement of the environment. This policy was in response to growing concerns about the ecological balance and preservation of wildlife in the United States while meeting the demands of a growing population. Any BJA grant recipient with a project involving construction, expansion, renovation, facility planning, site selection, site preparation, and security or facility upgrades must be in compliance with the NEPA requirements during the initiation of the project as part of its planning, site selection, and site preparation. The BJA grant recipient must complete the NEPA process prior to actual construction, expansion, renovation, or remodeling (including security upgrades). Additionally, any BJA grant recipient with a project involving the use of chemicals must complete the NEPA process prior to project initiation.

A Categorical Exclusion (CATEX)—a class of actions that, either individually or cumulatively, would not have a significant effect on the human environment and therefore would not require preparation of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement under NEPA—may be available for some projects where the environmental impact is minimal. A Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) has been conducted that may cover certain projects, particularly those limited to routine indoor laboratory activities.

Alternatively, a grant recipient may be required to conduct an environmental assessment (EA), to assess the need for a project or proposed action, alternatives to the project/action, and the environmental impacts of the proposed and alternative project/action. If a grantee is required to conduct an EA, BJA will provide this service free of charge. Applicants do not need to allocate funding for this process in their grant applications.

Depending on a review of the project, after award grant recipients may be asked to provide additional information, so BJA can determine if either the CATEX or the PEA completes the NEPA process for particular projects or if an EA is necessary. For more information regarding NEPA, please visit <https://bjaojp.gov/national-environmental-policy-act-nepa-guidance>.

The applicant should attach the additional requested documentation listed below in JustGrants.

- **Coverdell Statutory Certifications:** As described above in the [Eligibility](#) section, the Coverdell law provides that, to request a grant, each applicant must submit **five** certifications specific to the Coverdell Program.

- **Forensic Laboratory Accreditation Documentation:** Applicants should provide documentation of current accreditation with the application for any accredited laboratory (including a subrecipient laboratory) that is to receive funds under the FY25 Coverdell award. Acceptable types of documentation of current accreditation include: an electronic (scanned) copy of the current accreditation certificate(s), a digital photograph of the current accreditation certificate(s), or a letter from the accrediting body that includes the certificate number. Additionally, if a certificate references another document that contains key information on the type or scope of the accreditation, provide a copy of that supplemental documentation. Independent accrediting or certifying organizations may include ANAB, NAME, A2LA, AC&ME, or other appropriate accrediting bodies. Per 34 U.S.C. § 10562 (2), such an accrediting body would be “an accrediting body that is a signatory to an internationally recognized arrangement and that offers accreditation to forensic science conformity assessment bodies using an accreditation standard that is recognized by that internationally recognized arrangement.”

Accreditation document(s) should be attached as a separate file with an appropriately descriptive file name.

- **Tribal Authorizing Resolution (if applicable):** An application in response to this NOFO may require inclusion of Tribal authorizing documentation as an attachment. If applicable, the applicant will upload the Tribal authorizing documentation as an attachment in JustGrants. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for information on Tribal authorizing resolutions.
- **Timeline:** Provide a timeline listing key activities and milestones, and the quarters during which they will take place.

Disclosures and Assurances

The applicant will address the following disclosures and assurances.

Disclosure of Lobbying Activities: JustGrants will prompt each applicant to indicate if it is required to complete and submit a lobbying disclosure under 31 U.S.C. § 1352.

The applicant is required by law to complete and submit a lobbying disclosure form (Standard Form/SF-LLL) if it has paid or will pay any person to lobby in connection with the award for which it is applying AND this application is for an award in excess of \$100,000. This disclosure requirement is not applicable to such payments by an Indian Tribe, Tribal organization, or any other Indian organization that are permitted by other federal law.

Lobbying means (for this requirement) influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress. See 31 U.S.C. 1352; 28 C.F.R. part 69. Note: Most applicants do not engage in activities that trigger this disclosure requirement.

An applicant that is not required by law (31 U.S.C. 1352) to complete and submit a lobbying disclosure, should enter “No.” By doing so, the applicant is affirmatively asserting (under applicable penalties) that it has nothing to disclose under 31 U.S.C. § 1352 with regard to the application for the award at issue.

Disclosure of Duplication in Cost Items: To ensure funding coordination across grantmaking agencies, and to avoid unnecessary or inappropriate duplication of grant funding, the applicant

must disclose if it has any pending applications for federal funding, including pending applications for subawards of federal funds, for the same project and the same budget items included in this proposal. Complete the JustGrants Applicant Disclosure of Duplication in Cost Items form. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

DOJ Certified Standard Assurances: Review and accept the DOJ Certified Standard Assurances in JustGrants. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

DOJ Certifications: Review the DOJ document [Certifications Regarding Lobbying; Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; Drug-Free Workplace Requirements; Coordination with Affected Agencies](#). An applicant must review and sign the certification document in JustGrants. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for more information.

Applicant Disclosure and Justification—DOJ High-Risk Grantees (if applicable): If applicable, submit the DOJ High-Risk Disclosure and Justification as an attachment in JustGrants. A DOJ high-risk recipient is an award recipient that has received a DOJ high-risk designation based on a documented history of unsatisfactory performance, financial instability, management system or other internal control deficiencies, noncompliance with award terms and conditions on prior awards, or that is otherwise not responsible. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

Submission Dates & Times

Refer to [Basic Information: Key Dates and Times](#) for the submission dates and times.

Applicants should submit their applications as early as possible and recommended not later than 48 hours before the deadlines. To be considered timely, the full application must be submitted in JustGrants by the JustGrants application deadline. Applicants will use the Certify and Submit feature in JustGrants to confirm that all required application components have been entered, which includes identifying the Authorized Representative for the applicant. Once the application is submitted, the Application Submitter, Authorized Representative, and Entity Administrator receive a confirmation email.

An applicant will receive emails after successfully submitting application components in Grants.gov and JustGrants and should retain all emails and other confirmations received from the SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and JustGrants systems.

Experiencing Technical Issues Preventing Submission of an Application (Technical Waivers)

If an applicant misses a deadline due to unforeseen technical issues with SAM.gov, Grants.gov, or JustGrants, the applicant may request a waiver to submit an application after the deadline. OJP will only consider requests to submit an application via alternative methods or after the deadline when the applicant can document that there is a technical issue with a government system that was beyond their control and that prevents submission of the application via the standard process prior to the deadlines. Issues resulting from circumstances within the applicant's control, such as failure to begin the SAM.gov, Grants.gov, or JustGrants registration and application process in sufficient time, will not be considered.

Requests and documentation must be sent to the OJP Response Center at OJP.ResponseCenter@usdoj.gov. Applicants should follow these steps if they experience a technical issue:

- 1. Contact the relevant help desk to report the issue and receive a tracking number.**

See [Basic Information: Contact Information](#) for the phone numbers, email addresses, and operating hours of the SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and JustGrants help desks. Reports of technical issues to the help desk must occur **before** the application deadline.

If an applicant calls the help desk and experiences a long wait time, they can also email the help desk to obtain a tracking number. Tracking numbers are generated automatically when an applicant emails the applicable service desk, and for this reason, long call wait times for support do not relieve the applicant of the responsibility of getting a tracking number.

2. If an applicant has technical issues with SAM.gov or Grants.gov, the applicant must contact the OJP Response Center at OJP.ResponseCenter@usdoj.gov within 24 hours of the Grants.gov deadline to request approval to submit after the deadline. The applicant's request will need to include:

- A description of the technical difficulties experienced (provide screenshots if applicable).
- A timeline of the applicant's submission efforts (e.g., date and time the error occurred, date and time of actions taken to resolve the issue and resubmit and date and time support representatives responded).
- An attachment of the complete grant application and all the required documentation and materials (this serves as a "manual" submission of the application).
- The applicant's unique entity identifier (UEI).
- Any SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and JustGrants Service Desk tracking/ticket numbers documenting the technical issue.

3. If an applicant has technical issues with JustGrants that prevent application submission by the deadline, the applicant must contact the OJP Response Center at OJP.ResponseCenter@usdoj.gov within 24 hours of the JustGrants deadline to request approval to submit after the deadline. See step 2 for the list of information the applicant must provide as part of its request.

As a reminder: the waiver request will not be considered unless it includes documentation of attempts to receive technical assistance to resolve the issue prior to the application deadline. OJP will review each waiver request and the required supporting documentation and notify the applicant whether the request for late submission has been approved or denied. An applicant that does not provide documentation of a technical issue (including all information previously listed), or that does not submit a waiver request within the required time period, will be denied.

For more details on the waiver process, OJP encourages applicants to review the "Experiencing Technical Issues" section in the [Application Resource Guide](#).



APPLICATION REVIEW

Responsiveness (Basic Minimum Requirements) Review

OJP screens applications to ensure they meet the basic minimum requirements (BMR) prior to conducting the merit review. Following are the basic minimum requirements for this funding opportunity. If OJP determines that an application does not include these elements, it will not proceed to merit review and will not receive any further consideration.

- The application is submitted by an eligible applicant.
- The requested award amount does not exceed the award ceiling.
- The application is responsive to the scope of the NOFO.
- The following application elements are included:
 - SF-424 (Grants.gov)
 - Proposal Narrative (JustGrants)
 - Budget detail form, which includes the budget items, their calculations, and explanation (JustGrants)
 - **Five certifications required by the Coverdell law***:
 1. Certification as to Plan for Forensic Science Laboratories—[Application from a State or Certification as to Plan for Forensic Science Laboratories—Application from a Unit of Local Government](#)
 - The applicant is to submit only one version of the “Certification as to Plan for Forensic Science Laboratories.” DO NOT submit both versions of this certification. Applicant *states* are to submit the “Application from a State” version only; applicant *units of local government* are to submit the “Application from a Unit of Local Government” version only.
 2. Certification as to [Generally Accepted Laboratory Practices and Procedures](#)
 3. Certification as to [Forensic Science Laboratory System Accreditation](#)
 - Applicants requesting funds for only medical examiner’s offices or coroner’s offices in the state are not required to submit this certification.
 4. Certification as to [Use of Funds for New Facilities](#)
 - Applicants must submit this certification even if no new facilities are being constructed.
 5. Certification as to [External Investigations](#) **and** [Attachment](#)

Applicants whose application fails to meet the BMR are provided notice (including an appropriate point of contact for questions) within a few weeks after the submission due date.

Merit Review Criteria

Peer Review Criteria

Applications that meet the basic minimum requirements will be evaluated for technical merit by peer reviewers based on how the proposed project/program addresses the following criteria:

- **Statement of the Problem/Description of the Issue (20%):** What critical issue or problem the applicant is proposing to address with this project.

- **Project Goals and Objectives (20%):** How the proposed project will address the identified need and the purpose of the funding opportunity.
- **Project Design and Implementation (40%):** The strength of how the applicant will implement activities, including the soundness of the project design and how the activities align to the stated goals and objectives.
- **Capabilities and Competencies (10%):** The applicant's administrative and technical capacity to successfully complete this project.
- **Budget (10%):** Completeness and cost effectiveness.

Programmatic and Financial Review Criteria

After the peer review, applications undergo additional programmatic and financial reviews. OJP staff may reach out to applicants during the programmatic or financial review if a submitted form is incomplete or needs to be updated. Note that OJP staff are not authorized to provide information on peer review scores or comment on programmatic, risk, or budget/financial reviews while the merit review is in progress.

In addition to BMR and peer review criteria, other important considerations for OJP include geographic coverage, strategic priorities (including, but not limited to, the priority areas already mentioned, if applicable), available funding, past performance, and the extent to which the budget detail form accurately explains project costs that are reasonable, necessary, and otherwise allowable under federal law and applicable federal cost principles. If cost sharing/match is not required for this opportunity, applicants will not receive higher consideration by proposing a voluntary match contribution in their budget.

Risk Review

Pursuant to the Part 200 Uniform Requirements, before award decisions are made, OJP also reviews information related to applicant risk. OJP assesses whether an applicant with one or more prior federal awards has a satisfactory record of performance, integrity, and business ethics, including by (among other things) checking whether the applicant is listed in SAM.gov as excluded from receiving a federal award.

Depending on the severity and nature of the risk factors, the risk assessment may result in the removal of an applicant from consideration or selection for award, or it may result in additional post-award conditions and oversight for an awarded applicant.

In addition, if OJP anticipates that an award will exceed \$250,000 in federal funds, OJP also must review and consider any information about the applicant that appears in the non-public segment of the integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov.

Important Note on Responsibility/Qualification Data (formerly FAPIIS): An applicant may review and comment on any information about its organization that currently appears in SAM.gov and was entered by a federal awarding agency. OJP will consider such comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in SAM.gov, in its assessment of the risk posed by the applicant.

Selection Process

All final award decisions will be made by the Assistant Attorney General, unless a statute explicitly authorizes award decisions by another official or there is written delegation of authority

to another official. This official may consider not only peer review ratings and program office recommendations, but also other factors as indicated in the “Application Review” section to make final award decisions. For additional information on the application review process, see the [Application Resource Guide](#).



AWARD NOTICES

Federal Award Notices

For successful applicants, JustGrants will send a system-generated email to the Application Submitter, Authorized Representative, and Entity Administrator with information on accessing their official award package in JustGrants. The award package will include key information (such as funding amount and period of performance) as well as award conditions that must be followed. The Authorized Representative for the entity should accept or decline the award within 45 days of the notification. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for information on award notifications and instructions.

Applicants not selected for an award will receive notification after all award recipients have been notified. OJP also provides unsuccessful applicants with a summary of peer reviewer comments.

Future Funding Opportunities

OJP may, in certain cases, provide additional funding in future years to awards made under this funding opportunity through continuation awards. When making continuation award decisions, OJP will consider, among other factors, OJP's strategic priorities, a recipient's overall management of the award, and the progress of the work funded under the award.

Applications submitted under this FY 2025 funding opportunity may be funded in future fiscal years, dependent on, among other considerations, the merit of the applications and the availability of appropriations.



POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

Reporting

All award recipients under this funding opportunity will be required to submit the following reports and data:

- Quarterly financial reports.
- Semi-annual performance reports.
- Final financial and performance reports.
- If applicable, an annual audit report in accordance with the Part 200 Uniform Requirements or specific award conditions.
- For each fiscal year of an award, recipients will be required to report to BJA on an annual basis:
 1. The number and nature of any allegations of serious negligence or misconduct substantially affecting the integrity of forensic results.
 2. Information on the referrals of such allegations (e.g., the government entity or entities to which referred, the date of referral).
 3. The outcome of such referrals (if known as of the date of the report).
 4. If any such allegations were not referred, the reason(s) for the nonreferral.
- Coverdell grantees are required to submit a final report that must, among other things: (1) include a summary and assessment of the program carried out with FY25 grant funds, (2) identify the number and type of cases accepted during the FY25 award period by the forensic laboratory or laboratories that received FY25 grant funds, (3) cite the specific improvements in forensic science and medical examiner/coroner services (including any reduction in forensic analysis backlog) that occurred as a direct result of the FY25 grant award, and (4) detail the progress of any unaccredited forensic science service provider that received FY25 grant funds toward obtaining accreditation.

See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information on specific post-award reporting requirements, including performance measure data and the method for submitting reports in OJP's online systems. Future awards and fund drawdowns may be withheld if reports are delinquent, and in appropriate cases, OJP may require additional reports.

Performance Measure Reporting

Award recipients are required to submit performance measure data and performance reports in JustGrants on a semi-annual basis. Applicants selected for an award will receive further guidance on post-award reporting processes.

Program- and Award-Specific Award Conditions

OJP includes various conditions on its awards. These may include program-specific conditions, which typically apply to all recipients of a funding opportunity, and award-specific conditions, which are included to address recipient-specific issues (e.g., programmatic or financial risk). Recipients may view all conditions, and actions required to satisfy those conditions, in the award package in JustGrants.

Administrative, National Policy, and Other Legal Requirements

If selected for funding, in addition to implementing the funded project consistent with the OJP-approved application, the recipient must comply with all award conditions and all applicable requirements of federal statutes and regulations, including the applicable requirements referred to in the assurances and certifications executed in connection with award acceptance. For additional information on these legal requirements, see the “Administrative, National Policy, and Other Legal Requirements” section in the [Application Resource Guide](#).

Civil Rights Compliance

If a successful applicant accepts funding from OJP—as a recipient of OJP funding—that award recipient must comply with certain federal civil rights laws that prohibit the award recipient from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, or disability in how it delivers its program’s services or benefits and in its employment practices. The civil rights laws that may be applicable to the award include, but are not limited to, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the nondiscrimination provisions of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. These and other federal civil rights laws are discussed in greater detail on OJP’s [Legal Overview—FY 2025 Awards](#) webpage under the “Civil Rights Requirements” section. Additional resources are available from the [OJP Office for Civil Rights](#).

Compliance with Federal civil rights and nondiscrimination laws is material to the government’s decision to make any award and payment under this program, including for purposes of the False Claims Act, and each recipient will be required to certify (in its acceptance of the conditions of the award) that it does not operate any programs (including any such programs having components relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion) that violate any applicable Federal civil rights or nondiscrimination laws.

See OJP’s [Partnerships with Faith-Based and Other Neighborhood Organizations](#) webpage for specific information for faith-based organizations applying under this NOFO.

Financial Management and System of Internal Controls

Award recipients and subrecipients (including recipients or subrecipients that are pass-through entities) must, as described in the Part 200 Uniform Requirements set out at 2 C.F.R. 200.303, comply with standards for financial and program management. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

Information Technology Security Clauses

An application in response to this NOFO may require inclusion of information related to information technology security. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for more information.

Other Reporting Requirements

Applicants and recipients are required to notify OJP if you know that you or any of your organization’s principals for the award transaction are presently excluded or disqualified (*i.e.*, debarred or suspended) or otherwise meet any of the criteria in 2 C.F.R. 180.335. Recipients must comply with requirements in 2 C.F.R. Part 180, as implemented by DOJ in 2 C.F.R. Part 2867, which, among other things, require recipients to check certain information sources and, in some cases, notify the federal awarding agency prior to the agency awarding federal funds via contracts or subawards.

If a recipient's award includes a federal share of more than \$500,000 over the period of performance of the award, then the award (per 2 C.F.R. 200.113) will include a condition that may require the recipient to report and maintain certain information (relating to certain criminal, civil, and administrative proceedings) in SAM.gov. See [the Reporting Requirements page](#) for more information.



OTHER INFORMATION

Information Regarding Potential Evaluation of Programs and Activities

OJP may conduct or support an evaluation of the projects and activities funded under this NOFO. For additional information on what should be included in the application, see the [Application Resource Guide](#) section “Information Regarding Potential Evaluation of Programs and Activities.”

Freedom of Information and Privacy Act

See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for important information on the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. §§ 552 and 552a).

Applicants are advised not to include any unnecessary personally identifiable information, sensitive law enforcement information, or confidential financial information with the application.

Provide Feedback to OJP

See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for information on how to provide feedback to OJP.



APPLICATION CHECKLIST

BJA FY25 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement – Competitive Grants Program

This application checklist has been created as an aid in developing an application. For more information, reference the “[OJP Application Submission Steps](#)” in the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) and the [DOJ Application Submission Checklist](#).

SAM.gov Registration/Renewal

- Confirm that your entity’s registration in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) is active through the NOFO period. Submit a new or renewal registration in SAM.gov, if needed (see [Application Resource Guide](#)).

Grants.gov Registration

- Acquire an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) and a Grants.gov username and password (see [Application Resource Guide](#)).
- Acquire AOR confirmation from the E-Business Point of Contact (E-Biz POC) (see [Application Resource Guide](#)).

Grants.gov Opportunity Search

- Search for the funding opportunity in Grants.gov using the opportunity number, assistance listing number, or keyword(s).
- Access the funding opportunity and application package (see Step 7 under “[OJP Application Submission Steps](#)” in the [Application Resource Guide](#)).
- Sign up for Grants.gov email notifications (optional) (see [Application Resource Guide](#)).

Funding Opportunity Review and Project Planning

- Review all sections of the NOFO.
- Confirm your entity is eligible to receive funding (see [Eligibility: Eligible Applicants](#)).
- Confirm your proposed budget is within the allowable limits (see [Basic Information: Funding Details](#)), includes only allowable costs (see [Application Contents, Submission Requirements, and Deadlines: Budget Detail Form](#)), and includes cost sharing if applicable (see [Eligibility: Cost Sharing/Match Requirements](#)).
- Review the performance measures for this funding opportunity and confirm you will be prepared to collect and report on this data (see [Program Description: Performance Measures](#)).
- Review the “[Legal Overview—FY 2025 Awards](#)” in the [OJP Funding Resource Center](#) and confirm you are prepared to follow the requirements.
- Read OJP policy and guidance on conference approval, planning, and reporting under “Listing of Costs Requiring Prior Approval” in the [DOJ Grants Financial Guide](#) or see the [Application Resource Guide](#).

Submission Step 1: Grants.gov

After registering with SAM.gov, submit the SF-424 in Grants.gov.

- Complete and submit the SF-424 by the deadline.
- Confirm Section 8F of the SF-424 lists the name and contact information of the individual **who will complete the application in JustGrants**.

- Submit documents for Intergovernmental Review (if applicable).
- Confirm that, within 48 hours of your submission in Grants.gov, you receive four (4) Grants.gov email notifications:
 - A submission receipt
 - A validation receipt
 - A grantor agency retrieval receipt
 - An agency tracking number assignment
- If no Grants.gov receipt and validation email is received, or if error notifications are received, contact the OJP Response Center at 800-851-3420, 202-353-5556, or OJP.ResponseCenter@usdoj.gov or the Grants.gov Customer Support Hotline at 800-518-4726, 606-545-5035, or support@grants.gov regarding technical difficulties (see the [Application Resource Guide](#) section on “[Experiencing Unforeseen Technical Issues](#)”).
- Confirm that, within 24 hours after receipt of confirmation emails from Grants.gov, the individual listed in Section 8F of the SF-424 receives an email from JustGrants with login instructions.

Submission Step 2: JustGrants

- Complete the following information:
 - Entity and User Verification (first-time applicants)
 - Standard Applicant Information
 - Proposal Abstract
 - Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire (see [Application Resource Guide](#))
 - Agency Funding Priorities Inventory
- Upload the Proposal Narrative.*
- Complete the budget detail form.*
- Complete and upload the **five certifications required by the Coverdell law***:
 1. Certification as to [Plan for Forensic Science Laboratories—Application from a State or Certification as to Plan for Forensic Science Laboratories—Application from a Unit of Local Government](#)
 - The applicant is to submit only one version of the “Certification as to Plan for Forensic Science Laboratories.” DO NOT submit both versions of this certification. Applicant *states* are to submit the “Application from a State” version only; applicant *units of local government* are to submit the “Application from a Unit of Local Government” version only.
 2. Certification as to [Generally Accepted Laboratory Practices and Procedures](#)
 3. Certification as to [Forensic Science Laboratory System Accreditation](#)
 - Applicants requesting funds for only medical examiner’s offices or coroner’s offices in the state are not required to submit this certification.
 4. Certification as to [Use of Funds for New Facilities](#)
 - Applicants must submit this certification even if no new facilities are being constructed.
 5. Certification as to [External Investigations and Attachment](#)
- Upload other budget/financial attachments, as applicable.
- Upload additional application components, as applicable.
- Complete the required disclosures and assurances:

- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities and submission of SF-LLL, if prompted by the system
 - Disclosure of Duplication in Cost Items
 - DOJ Certified Standard Assurances
 - Applicant Disclosure and Justification – DOJ High-Risk Grantees
- Complete the required DOJ Certification on Lobbying; Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; Drug-Free Workplace Requirements; Coordination with Affected Agencies.

****Note: Items designated with an asterisk must be submitted for an application to meet the basic minimum requirements review. If OJP determines that an application does not include the designated items, it will neither proceed to peer review nor receive further consideration.***

JustGrants Review, Certification, and Application Submission

- Address any validation errors displayed on screen after attempted submission, then return to the “Certify and Submit” screen to submit the application.
- Note the confirmation message at the top of the page. Users will also receive a notification in the “bell” alerts confirming submission.
- If you do not receive an application submission confirmation email or validation from JustGrants, or if you receive an error notification, please contact the JustGrants Service Desk at 833-872-5175 or JustGrants.Support@usdoj.gov. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING CERTIFICATION REGARDING EXTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS INTO ALLEGATIONS OF SERIOUS NEGLIGENCE OR MISCONDUCT

The following guidance, provided by way of examples for applicants' review, is designed to illustrate elements of the external investigation certification that the official authorized to make the certification on behalf of the applicant agency must take into account in determining whether the certification may be properly made.

Because it is not possible for BJA to provide examples relating to every type of government entity with an appropriate process in place to conduct independent, external investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct substantially affecting the integrity of the forensic results committed by employees or contractors, this guidance should not be viewed as all inclusive. In addition, this guidance is not intended to constitute legal advice from BJA on the question of whether the required certification may be properly made on behalf of the applicant. Such a determination must be made by an appropriate official based on the statutory requirements of the certification after review of this guidance.

Illustrative Examples

One: The only government entity that will receive Coverdell award funds is a forensic laboratory that is a unit of a local law enforcement agency (e.g., a police department). The law enforcement agency has an Internal Affairs Division (IAD) that reports directly to the head of the law enforcement agency (the police chief) and the head of the unit of local government (the mayor/city commissioner). The IAD has the authority to conduct investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct by laboratory employees and contractors.

Guidance: Execution of the certification might be appropriate under these facts. Nevertheless, the official authorized to make the certification on behalf of the applicant agency must be satisfied that the IAD at issue has the requisite authority to conduct independent investigations (for example, whether the IAD is completely free from influence or supervision by laboratory management officials) into allegations relating to employees or contractors of the laboratory.

Two: A state intends to distribute Coverdell award funds to state and local forensic laboratories and medical examiners/coroners' offices. There is an Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in the state with authority to conduct investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct by employees and contractors of forensic laboratories and medical examiner/coroner's offices, both at the state and local levels.

Guidance: Execution of the certification might be appropriate under these facts. Nevertheless, the certifying official must be satisfied that the state OIG's authority in this regard is not circumscribed in such a way that the OIG's ability to conduct independent investigations is limited (for example, through a reporting hierarchy that does not provide for the OIG to report directly to the chief executive officer or another equally independent state official or office).

Three: A city has applied for a Coverdell award and all funds will go to the city's forensic laboratory. There is a process in place whereby the city's district attorney (DA) may appoint an independent investigator to conduct an investigation into allegations concerning the city's forensic laboratory. If the DA appoints an independent investigator, the investigator will have authority to investigate allegations of serious negligence or misconduct by both laboratory employees and contractors.

Guidance: Execution of the certification might be appropriate under these facts. In this regard, however, the certifying official must be satisfied that the process at issue (appointment of an independent investigator by the city DA) includes procedures under which allegations involving the laboratory are submitted to or are made known to the DA, and that the DA's authority and responsibility to appoint an independent investigator to conduct investigations of such allegations is sufficiently delineated in city policies and/or regulations so that the appropriate process in place is clearly defined.

Four: An applicant agency determines that the forensics laboratory director (or some other individual in the chain of command at the laboratory) has sole responsibility to conduct investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct committed by laboratory employees.

Guidance: Under these circumstances, execution of the certification would not be appropriate because there is no process in place to conduct independent external investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct committed by laboratory employees and contractors.

Five: A state applicant intends to distribute Coverdell award funds to forensic laboratories at both the state and local levels. An independent commission established by the Governor has authority to investigate allegations of serious negligence or misconduct by employees, including employees of units of local government within the state.

Guidance: Under these circumstances, the existence of this commission is not itself a sufficient basis for execution of the certification. In this regard, the commission does not have authority to investigate allegations of serious negligence or misconduct by contractors of state and local government forensic laboratories that receive Coverdell funds. (If, however, some other government entity, distinct from the commission, has a process in place to conduct independent external investigations of allegations of serious negligence or misconduct by such contractors, execution of the certification might be appropriate depending on all the facts.)

Six: A local forensic laboratory, which is intended to receive a portion of the funds from a Coverdell award to a state, notifies the state applicant that a quality assurance official is responsible for investigating allegations of serious negligence or misconduct by employees and contractors of the local forensic laboratory. The quality assurance official reports to the director of the forensic laboratory.

Guidance: Under these circumstances, execution of the certification would not be appropriate because the quality assurance official reports to the director of the forensic laboratory; therefore, there is no process in place to conduct independent external investigations of allegations against the forensics laboratory as required to make the certification.

Seven: An applicant agency (a forensics laboratory) intends to employ a contractor or a nongovernmental organization to conduct investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct committed by laboratory employees.

Guidance: Under these circumstances, execution of the certification would not be appropriate as there is neither a government entity nor an appropriate process in place to conduct independent external investigations of allegations against the laboratory, whether alleged to be committed by laboratory employees and/or contractors, because the contractor or nongovernmental entity is employed by and responsible to the forensics laboratory.

Eight: An applicant agency is accredited by an independent accrediting or certifying organization such as ANAB, NAME, A2LA, IAC&ME, etc.

Guidance: In this situation, execution of the certification would not be appropriate. The fact of accreditation or certification by an outside entity on its own does not demonstrate that the agency has a process in place to investigate allegations of serious negligence or misconduct committed by employees or contractors. There is insufficient information to properly make the required certification in this situation.

If OJP determines that an application does not include these elements, it will not proceed to peer review and will not receive any further consideration.

Frequently Asked Questions for the FY25 Paul Coverdell Competitive NOFO

1. Q: Is one single applicant permitted to submit multiple applications under the current Coverdell Competitive Program?

A: Yes, however only one award will be made to each applicant under the Coverdell Competitive Program. (Please note that if an applicant submits multiple versions of the same application, OJP will review only the most recent system-validated version submitted.)

2. Q: If an applicant from a unit of local government gets a Coverdell Competitive Award, does that affect the maximum amount the state can apply for under the formula grant?

A: No. If an applicant unit of local government is the entity that receives a competitive award, that does not impact the maximum amount the state can apply for under this funding opportunity.

3. Q: I am a state agency. Do I have to apply through the SAA in order to be considered eligible?

A: Yes, all state agencies must apply through the SAA.

4. Q: Do I have to be accredited in order to apply?

A: Applicants do not have to be currently accredited to apply; however, Coverdell awardees must use grant funds to prepare and apply for accreditation of any FY25 Coverdell grant-funded unaccredited forensic laboratory system, including any laboratory operated by a unit of local government within the state, not more than 2 years after the FY25 Coverdell award date. Medical examiner's and coroner's offices are exempt from this accreditation requirement. The

accrediting body must be “a signatory to an internationally recognized arrangement” and one that “offers accreditation to forensic science conformity assessment bodies using an accreditation standard that is recognized by that internationally recognized arrangement.”

5. Q: Our law enforcement agency is accredited (e.g., CALEA)—are we eligible to apply?

A: With few exceptions, law enforcement agencies with law enforcement accreditation, rather than forensic laboratory or medical examiner accreditation, are not eligible for Coverdell funding. The accrediting body must be “a signatory to an internationally recognized arrangement” and one that “offers accreditation to forensic science conformity assessment bodies using an accreditation standard that is recognized by that internationally recognized arrangement.” See FAQ #4 above. Furthermore, for eligibility, the applicant must meet the definition of a forensic laboratory as outlined in the [Definitions](#) section of the NOFO.