

BJA FY 2026 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement— Formula Grants Program

Grants.gov Funding Opportunity Number: O-BJA-2026-172759

Application Deadlines in Eastern Time (ET):

1. Complete SF-424 and submit in Grants.gov: **October 30, 2026, by 11:59 p.m. ET**
 2. Submit full application in JustGrants: **November 6, 2026, by 8:59 p.m. ET**
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1. BASIC INFORMATION

Purpose of the Funding

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) is committed to advancing work that furthers the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) mission to keep our country safe and secure and uphold the rule of law and protect the rights of American citizens. 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.

This is a notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) for the **BJA FY 2026 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants—Formula Program**. This opportunity funds improvements to 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. 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 61 percent of available funds to specifically target the challenges that opioids and synthetic drugs have brought to the forensic science community.

Specific forensic definitions and information necessary to complete this application can be found at the [Coverdell Program website](#).

See the [Eligible Applicants](#) section for eligibility details.

Funding Details

Announcement Type	Initial
Assistance Listing Number	16.742
Statutory Authority	Pub. L. No. 90-351, Title I, Part BB (codified at 34 U.S.C. 10561-10566)
Grants.gov Opportunity Number	O-BJA-2026-172759
Expected Total Amount of Funding	Up to \$23,757,080
Anticipated Number of Awards	56
Award Type(s)	Grant
Anticipated Award Amount	Based on population
Expected Award Period(s)	24 months starting on October 1, 2026

Key Dates and Times

NOFO Release Date	September 21, 2026
SAM.gov Registration/Renewal	Begin the process by September 30, 2026 and no later than October 20, 2026
Step 1: Grants.gov Deadline	11:59 p.m. ET on October 30, 2026
Step 2: JustGrants Deadline	8:59 p.m. ET on November 6, 2026

See [Questions?](#) at the end of this NOFO for agency contact information.

2. ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Applicants

The types of entities that are eligible to apply are:

Government Entities

- o State governments

Cost Sharing (Match) Requirement: This NOFO does **not** require cost sharing (match).

Additional Eligibility Factors

Under the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvements Grant Program, state administering agencies (SAAs) may be eligible and apply for both formula and competitive funds. This NOFO is **ONLY** for formula funds. An applicant seeking to apply for Coverdell competitive funds (consistent with 34 U.S.C. § 10563(a)(2)) that are available to eligible states and units of local government would need to apply separately under **BJA's FY 2026 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement—Competitive Grants Program NOFO**.

Any state application for funding **MUST** be submitted by the Coverdell SAA (see a list of SAAs on the OJP website at <https://www.ojp.gov/funding/state-administering-agencies/overview>). Other interested state agencies or departments must coordinate with their respective SAAs. SAAs are expected to consider the accreditation status of forensic science laboratories within their states in formulating their requests for formula funding.

Certifications: You must submit the following certifications. See [Additional Application Components](#) for how to submit.

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

- A certification and description regarding a plan for forensic science laboratories ([state form](#)).
- A certification regarding use of [generally accepted laboratory practices](#).
- A certification regarding [forensic science laboratory system accreditation](#).

Note: 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)).

- A certification and description regarding [use of funds for new facilities](#).

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

- A certification regarding [external investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct](#) and the [External Investigations Attachment Template](#). In connection with the certification regarding external investigations, 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. Detailed information on

each certification can be found on the [Coverdell Program website](#). 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 on the [Coverdell Program website](#).

3. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Statutory Authority

Pub. L. No. 90-351, Title I, Part BB (codified at 34 U.S.C. 10561-10566)

Agency Funding Priorities

In order to advance public safety and help meet its mission, OJP's priorities include:

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

Unallowable Activities: 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.

Goals and Objectives of This Funding Opportunity

Goal 1: Improve quality of forensic science services.

- **Objective 1:** 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:** 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:** Educate and train forensic pathologists.
- **Objective 4:** Fund medicolegal death investigation systems to facilitate accreditation of medical examiners and coroner offices and certification of medicolegal death investigators.

Goal 2: Improve timeliness of forensic science services.

- **Objective 1:** Eliminate backlog in the analysis of forensic science evidence, including, among other things, backlogs 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:** Train, assist, and employ forensic laboratory personnel and medicolegal death investigators to eliminate such a backlog.

Expected Outcomes

OJP expects recipients to submit deliverables and performance reports, as described below. Read the [Application Resource Guide](#) for more information. 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 will be expected to submit the following:

- On an annual basis, an addendum report that shall be attached to the semi-annual performance report that is due January 30 of each year which shall include:
 - The number and nature of any allegations of serious negligence or misconduct.
 - Information on the referrals of such allegations of serious negligence or

misconduct (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.
- A final report that must include the following:
 - A summary and assessment of the program carried out with this grant, which shall include a comparison of pre-grant and post-grant forensic science capabilities.
 - The average number of days between submission of a sample to a forensic science laboratory or forensic science laboratory system in the state operated by the state or by a unit of local government and the delivery of test results to the requesting office or agency.
 - The number and type of cases accepted during the grant award period by the forensic laboratory or laboratories that received grant funds.
 - The progress of any unaccredited forensic science service provider receiving grant funds toward obtaining accreditation.

Performance Reports

OJP requires recipients to submit regular performance reports that communicate progress toward achieving [Program Goals and Objectives](#). Read information on [performance reporting](#).

Award recipients will receive further guidance on post award reporting requirements.

4. APPLICATION CONTENTS AND FORMAT

Application Contents List

The table below lists the contents for your application. Refer to the [DOJ Grant Application Submission Checklist](#) for application instructions.

Application Item	Submission Type
Step 1: Grants.gov	
Application for Federal Assistance: SF-424	Online Form
Step 2: JustGrants	
Standard Applicant Information	Online Form
Proposal Abstract	Text Box

Application Item	Submission Type
Data Requested With Application - Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire (including Applicant Disclosure of High-Risk Status) - Agency Funding Priorities Inventory	Online Form
Proposal Narrative	Attachment
Budget	Attachment
Other Budget/Financial Attachments - Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable) - Consultant Rate (if applicable) - Limitation on Use of Award Funds for Employee Compensation for Awards Over \$250,000; Waiver (if applicable)	Attachment
Additional Application Components Coverdell Statutory Certifications: - Certification as to Plan for Forensic Science laboratories—Application from a State - Certification as to Generally Accepted Laboratory Practices and Procedures - Certification as to Forensic Science Laboratory System Accreditation - Certification as to Use of Funds for New Facilities - Certification as the External Investigations and External Investigations Attachment - Forensic Laboratory Accreditation Documentation - Accreditation Status of All Forensic Laboratories within the State - Statement Regarding Proposed Use of Funds to Address Challenges Posed by Opioids and/or Synthetic Drugs - Tribal Authorizing Resolution (if applicable) - Timeline	Attachment

Standard Applicant Information

Review and edit as needed the information imported from the SF-424 submitted in Grants.gov. Add ZIP codes for areas affected by the project.

Proposal Abstract

In JustGrants, enter a proposal abstract (limited to 2,000 characters) summarizing the proposed project. As abstracts for funded projects are public, do not include any personally identifying information (e.g., staff names). 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).
- Where the project will take place (i.e., the service area, if applicable).
- 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).

View 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)

Review information on this [questionnaire](#).

Proposal Narrative

Format of the Proposal Narrative

Submit the narrative as an attachment in JustGrants. The document should:

- Be double-spaced, using a standard 12-point size font
- Have no less than 1-inch margins
- Have numbered pages
- Not exceed 10 pages

Tables, charts, and graphs included in the proposal narrative will count toward the page limit and may use a legible font smaller than 12-point.

Sections of the Proposal Narrative

The Proposal Narrative must include the four sections listed below.

1. Description of the Need: What critical issue or problem do you propose 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.

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 you hope to accomplish).
- Project objectives (objectives are specific outcomes you plan to achieve through project activities).
- How your project goals and objectives relate to the [goals and objectives of the funding opportunity](#).

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

- What activities you will conduct to achieve the proposed goals and objectives.
- How you will deliver or complete those activities.
- When the activities will take place.
- Who in your 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 you plan to use subrecipients to help conduct the project, please name them (if they are known) or describe how you will identify them. Please describe their role in conducting project activities.

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

- A short description of your capacity to deliver the proposed project and meet the post-award requirements, if funded.
- A description of projects or activities your organization has conducted, or is currently conducting, that demonstrates your 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 on [project evaluations](#).

Budget and Associated Documentation

Budget

Use the Budget Detail Worksheet Separate Attachment (attach file in JustGrants) to submit the budget. Read information on [budget preparation](#) and [JustGrants Application Submission Training](#).

- List each cost needed to implement the project under the appropriate cost category.
- Clearly name and describe each cost.
- Show the computation of each cost (e.g., cost per unit, number of units, and total cost).
- Enter narrative, as needed, to explain the cost calculations and connection to your project goals, objectives, and activities.
- Include only costs that are reasonable, allocable, and necessary to implement the project. They must be allowable under the funding statute and agency requirements.¹

The following information specific to this funding opportunity will help you develop your project budget:

Availability of funds: Eighty-five percent (\$23,757,080) of the available Coverdell funds will be allocated among eligible states based on population through the Coverdell Formula Program. The approximate amount each eligible state could receive can be found in the [Estimated Amount of FY 2026 Base Funds by State](#).

The Coverdell law sets a floor for the total amount an eligible applicant state will receive as its Coverdell grant at 1 percent of total funds available. If \$23,757,080 of funds are available for FY 2026, the minimum Coverdell grant to an eligible state would be not less than \$237,571. In that case, if the amount a state would otherwise receive as its total Coverdell funding (including both formula funds and any competitive funds) is less than \$237,571, BJA will increase that state's total funding to \$237,571.

Permissible and Impermissible Expenses

Review the list of permissible and impermissible expenses under the Coverdell Program on the [Coverdell Program website](#) prior to submitting your application.

Budget/Financial Attachments

- **Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable):** If the budget includes indirect costs calculated using a current, federally approved indirect cost rate, upload your indirect cost rate agreement. Read information about [indirect costs](#).
- **Consultant Rate (if applicable):** Read information on [limits to consultant rates](#) and whether you need to request approval to exceed those limits.

¹ See [2 C.F.R. Part 200, Subpart E](#) and the [DOJ Grants Financial Guide](#). Read information on [unallowable costs](#) that apply to all funding opportunities.

- **Limitation on Use of Award Funds for Employee Compensation for Awards Over \$250,000; Waiver (if applicable):** Read information on this [limitation](#) to determine whether you need to submit a waiver.
- **Disclosure of Process Related to Executive Compensation (if applicable):** Applicants to this funding opportunity are not required to provide this disclosure.

Additional Application Components

Attach these 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.
 - Certification as to Plan for Forensic Science Laboratories—[Application from a State](#).
 - Certification as to [Generally Accepted Laboratory Practices and Procedures](#).
 - 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.
 - Certification as to [Use of Funds for New Facilities](#).
 - Applicants must submit this certification even if no new facilities are being constructed.
 - Certification as to [External Investigations](#) **and** [External Investigations Attachment](#).
- **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 FY 2026 Coverdell award. 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 Status of All Forensic Laboratories within the State:** Each applicant is to prepare a list of all forensic science laboratories in the state specifying their accreditation status, the name of the accrediting body and the scope of each accreditation.
 - SAAs are expected to consider the accreditation status of all forensic science laboratories within their states.
 - For each forensic science laboratory within the state lacking accreditation, the SAA is to request funds in its application budget and include plans in its program narrative for such laboratories to prepare and apply for accreditation.

- **Statement Regarding Proposed Use of Funds to Address Challenges Posed by Opioids and/or Synthetic Drugs:** A state that does not intend to use at least 61 percent of its FY 2026 Coverdell allocation for opioid and/or synthetic drug-related projects, must affirm this in writing. This statement should specify the approximate percentage and be signed by the authorized representative of the applicant.
- **Tribal Authorizing Resolution (if applicable):** Read information on whether you may need to submit a [Tribal Authorizing Resolution](#).
- **Timeline:** Provide a timeline listing key activities and milestones, and the quarters during which they will take place.

Disclosures and Assurances

Read the [disclosures and assurances](#) and complete them in JustGrants:

- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- Disclosure of Duplication in Cost Items (if applicable)
- DOJ Certified Standard Assurances
- DOJ Certifications
- Applicant Disclosure and Justification – DOJ High-Risk Grantees (if applicable)

5. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES

The [DOJ Grant Application Submission Checklist](#) provides instructions for how to submit your application by the [deadlines](#). [Executive Order \(E.O.\) 12372](#) (Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs) does apply to this funding opportunity: read the [Application Resource Guide](#) for details. Read OJP's policy for applicants to [request late submission](#) due to technical difficulties, severe weather, or natural or manmade disasters.

6. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

OJP will review applications to ensure the information presented is reasonable, understandable, measurable, achievable, and consistent with the goals of the funding opportunity. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for information on the application review process for formula grants, including risk review, and the deciding official.

7. AWARD NOTICES

Read about the [award notification](#) process.

8. POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS & ADMINISTRATION

Read the [Application Resource Guide](#) for more information about: standard award terms and conditions, administrative and national policy requirements, and post-award reporting requirements.

Potential Environmental Impact: Grant programs that involve chemicals must comply with [NEPA requirements](#).

9. QUESTIONS?

NOFO Contact	Name: OJP Response Center Phone: 800-851-3420 or 202-353-5556 (TTY for hearing-impaired callers only) Email: OJP.ResponseCenter@usdoj.gov Hours: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. ET, Monday–Friday
SAM.gov Help Desk	Website: sam.gov/help Hours: 8 a.m.–8 p.m. ET, Monday–Friday (closed federal holidays)
Grants.gov Help Desk	Phone: 800-518-4726 Email: support@grants.gov Website: grants.gov/support Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (closed federal holidays)
JustGrants Help Desk	Phone: 833-872-5175 Email: JustGrants.Support@usdoj.gov Hours: 7:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m. ET, Monday–Friday and 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. ET on Saturday, Sunday, and federal holidays.