



Bureau of Justice Assistance

Program Brief



The Bulletproof Vest Partnership

The purpose of the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Acts of 1998 and 2000 (Public Laws 105-181 and 106-517) is to protect the lives of law enforcement officers by helping states and units of local and tribal governments equip their law enforcement officers with armor vests. The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), is responsible for administering the program.

An applicant may request funds to help purchase one vest per officer per fiscal year. The chief executive officer (CEO) of each eligible jurisdiction coordinates the vest needs of its eligible law enforcement agencies. Beginning in 2002, federal payments will cover 50 percent of the total vest costs for smaller jurisdictions with populations of fewer than 100,000 residents. For larger jurisdictions, the program provides up to 50 percent of the funding; actual percentages will vary depending on each year's appropriation and statutory funding requirements for smaller jurisdictions.

Richard R. Nedelkoff, Director

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA

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BJA



About BJA

The Bureau of Justice Assistance was established in 1984 as a component of the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. BJA provides leadership and resources to state, local, and tribal governments and communities to reduce crime, violence, and drug abuse and to strengthen the nation's criminal justice system. BJA provides this assistance through formula and discretionary grants, training and technical assistance, publications, and the BJA web site.

For Further Information

For more general information about the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Acts, go to <http://vests.ojp.gov> and check the Frequently Asked Questions section. For technical and Internet support, contact the Vest Help Desk (toll-free) at 1-877-75VESTS (1-877-758-3787).

Bureau of Justice Assistance

810 Seventh Street NW.
Washington, DC 20531
202-616-6500
Fax: 202-305-1367
Web site: www.usdoj.gov/BJA

For publications and information on other BJA-funded programs, contact

Bureau of Justice Assistance Clearinghouse

P.O. Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000
1-800-688-4252
Web site: www.ncjrs.org

Clearinghouse staff are available Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. eastern time. Ask to be placed on the BJA mailing list.

U.S. Department of Justice Response Center

1-800-421-6770 or locally at 202-307-1480

Response Center staff are available Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. eastern time.

Eligibility

Eligible jurisdictions include general purpose units of local government (such as cities, counties, parishes, and municipalities), federally recognized Indian tribes, the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands. Applications must be submitted by the jurisdiction's CEO or authorized representative.

How To Participate

The entire application and payment process occurs over the Internet. Eligible applicants begin the process by registering at the program's dedicated web site: <http://vests.ojp.gov>. The program accepts applications during its annual open period, which normally runs for 90 days during the months of January through April of each year.

Applicants can read online about vest models that meet National Institute of Justice (NIJ) standards for armor vests, and link to vest vendors and manufacturers. After a jurisdiction's CEO has determined the number and types of vests needed, he or she completes an online request for funding. The system accepts only one application for funds from eligible jurisdictions each fiscal year. Once funding has been approved, jurisdictions purchase new vests directly from vest distributors.

After a jurisdiction receives the vests, jurisdiction and law enforcement agency representatives verify receipt and request federal payments online. Funds are electronically deposited directly in the jurisdiction's bank account, established during the online registration period.



For more information on the Bulletproof Vest Partnership—including the application process and vest manufacturers—visit our web site at <http://vests.ojp.gov>.



Special Program Requirements

- ◆ Beginning in 2002, jurisdictions with fewer than 100,000 residents will receive the full 50 percent federal funding for approved applications. Larger jurisdictions will receive up to 50 percent, based on remaining appropriated funds.
- ◆ Each applicant must pay at least 50 percent of the cost of purchased vests. Only federally recognized tribal governments may use other federal funds for their portion of the payment. States, local governments, and territories may use a variety of funds including asset forfeitures, general revenues, and personal contributions to pay their share.
- ◆ “Law enforcement officer” means any officer, agent, or employee of a state, unit of local government, or federally recognized Indian tribe authorized by law or by a government agency to engage in or supervise the prevention, detection, or investigation of any violation of criminal law, or authorized by law to supervise sentenced criminal offenders. This definition includes, but is not limited to, police officers, sheriff’s deputies, correctional officers, parole and probation agents, and pretrial services officers. Paid full-time and part-time and volunteer personnel are eligible.
- ◆ “Armor vest” means body armor that has been tested and found to comply with applicable NIJ ballistic and stab standards. Several hundred vest makes and models from dozens of manufacturers currently meet these standards.

- ◆ NIJ-approved vests purchased on or after March 1, 1999, are eligible for funding. Once an application for funding has been submitted and approved by DOJ, jurisdictions have up to 4 additional years to purchase their vests and request payment.

Overall Program Success

The online Internet application process is working very smoothly, allowing several thousand jurisdictions, of all sizes and from every state, to receive funding and make vest purchases in accordance with their needs. Millions of federal dollars have been paid to participating jurisdictions and tens of thousands of ballistic and stab vests have been purchased to protect our nation’s law enforcement personnel.

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Photos courtesy of the Office of Law Enforcement Technology Commercialization (a program of the National Institute of Justice) and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

