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REPORT

Fiscal Year 2009 Report on the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program

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The Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program, managed by the Office of Justice Programs' National Institute of Justice (NIJ), provides funding to States and to units of local government to improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science and medical examiner services, in accordance with the Coverdell Act. For the purposes of the Act, the District of Columbia and the five U.S. territories are considered States. NIJ executes the Coverdell Grants Program through a grant solicitation that has both a formula and a competitive component. Only States are eligible to apply for the formula component.

The Coverdell Act requires that 75 percent of the total program funds be awarded to States through State Administering Agencies (SAAs). These "base" awards are made to all eligible SAAs who apply based on the population of the individual States. The Coverdell Act requires that the remaining 25 percent of program funds be awarded competitively. These "competitive" funds may be awarded to SAAs or dispersed directly to units of local government based on the merits of the respective applications. Both States and local governments that provide forensic science or medical examiner services may apply for the competitive component.

Applications for competitive funding are reviewed by an independent panel made up of subject matter experts from the forensic science community. The panelists review and rate the applications individually based on how well each meets the specific evaluation criteria cited in the solicitation.

On April 15, 2009, NIJ released the solicitation seeking applications for funding under the Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program. NIJ received 213 applications; 25 States applied for base funding, while 29 States applied for a combination of base and competitive funding. An additional 143 applications were received from units of local government for competitive funding. Sixteen applications were denied due to various circumstances such as duplicate applications, State entities not eligible, and non-responsive to solicitation criteria.

NIJ made a total of 103 awards valued at \$23,399,500; 48 States received base awards, 6 States received combination base and competitive awards, and 49 units of local government received competitive awards.

NIJ has successfully administered the Coverdell Program since 2002. NIJ monitors each award to ensure compliance with federal statutes, regulations and policies designed to provide assurance that federal funds are used appropriately. Coverdell applicants' budgets are reviewed to ensure they are in accord with the work promised in the grant application and consistent with Coverdell Program statutory and policy requirements. Grantees are monitored through the Grants Progress Assessment (GPA) Program to review laboratory practices and grant compliance. In FY 2009, NIJ awarded \$800,000 to the National Forensic Science Technology Center to support the GPA Program.

NIJ is pleased to report that as a result of the funding provided by Congress in FY 2009, NIJ increased the Coverdell Program minimum base award to States and territories from \$99,337 in FY 2008 to \$140,397 in FY 2009 and increased the maximum competitive award to \$125,000 versus \$95,000 in FY 2008. Since its inception, the Coverdell Program has awarded 660 grants to States and units of local government to improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science services.

NIJ is grateful for the opportunity to help the criminal justice community by improving the quality and timeliness of forensic science and medical examiner services. We look forward to continuing these efforts through important programs such as the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program.

View FY 2009 Coverdell funds awarded to State Administering Agencies and to units of local government within those states:

<https://nij.gov/funding/pages/funding-detail.aspx?solicitationid=2069>

The table includes "Base" and "Competitive" funding amounts and a short program description for each award.