



# BJA Bureau of Justice Assistance Fact Sheet

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## The Bulletproof Vest Partnership

The purpose of the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-181) 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 Act authorizes \$25 million per year for 3 years, with the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), U.S. Department of Justice, being responsible for administering the program. All transactions between BJA and the applicants occur over the Internet, representing a major technological innovation.

Eligible jurisdictions may request funds to help purchase one vest per officer per fiscal year. The chief executive officer (CEO) of each jurisdiction coordinates the vest needs among all of its law enforcement agencies. Federal payments will cover up to 50 percent of each jurisdiction's total vest costs.

### Eligibility

Jurisdictions eligible to apply are 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 application process by registering at the program's Web site at [vests.ojp.gov](http://vests.ojp.gov). Please access this Web site for the latest information about program dates and application deadlines. While online, applicants can read about vest models



that meet National Institute of Justice (NIJ) standards for armor vests and link to vest vendors. 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 each eligible jurisdiction for each fiscal year. Once funding has been approved, jurisdictions order the vests directly from local vest distributors.

After a jurisdiction receives the approved vests, the jurisdiction and law enforcement agency contacts verify receipt and request federal payments online. Funds are deposited directly into the jurisdiction's bank account.

### Special Program Requirements

- ❑ At least half of the funds disbursed through this program must go to units of government serving fewer than 100,000 residents.
- ❑ Each applicant must match 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 match. States, local governments, and territories may use a variety of other matching funds including asset forfeiture, general revenues, and personal contributions.

The Bulletproof Vest Partnership comprises the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the U.S. Census Bureau, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, the Office of Justice Programs, the National Institute of Justice, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

- ❑ “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. Full-time, part-time, and volunteer personnel are eligible.
- ❑ “Armor vest” means body armor, no less than Type I, that has been tested through the voluntary compliance testing program operated by the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center of NIJ and found to meet NIJ Standard 0101.03 or any subsequent revision. More than 1,600 vest models from 60 manufacturers meet this standard. The program will also cover NIJ-approved vest models meeting the new stab standard once vests have been tested and approved by NIJ.
- ❑ NIJ-approved vests purchased on or after March 1, 1999, may be eligible for funding. Jurisdictions have

4 years after the year in which their application was approved to order, receive, and request funding.

### **First-Year Program Success**

In the first year of the program, \$23 million was provided to more than 3,500 state, local, and tribal governments to purchase more than 92,000 vests for their officers. The most popular threat-level vest was level II, accounting for 62 percent of vests in all applications with a national average price of \$493. Next was level IIIA, totaling 22 percent of vests at an average cost of \$703, followed by level IIA, totaling 15 percent of vests at an average cost of \$492.

### **For More Information**

For more general information about the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act of 1998, visit [vests.ojp.gov](http://vests.ojp.gov) and click on the Frequently Asked Questions section or contact the U.S. Department of Justice Response Center at 1-800-421-6770 or 202-307-1480. Response Center staff are available Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. eastern time.

FS 000259  
April 2000

**U.S. Department of Justice**  
Office of Justice Programs  
*Bureau of Justice Assistance*

*Washington, DC 20531*

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