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# National Institute of Justice

## S o l i c i t a t i o n

*Sarah V. Hart, Director*

*May 2002*

### Solicitation for the Crime Laboratory Improvement Program for FY 2002

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:**  
July 17, 2002

**U.S. Department of Justice**  
**Office of Justice Programs**  
810 Seventh Street N.W.  
Washington, DC 20531

**John D. Ashcroft**  
*Attorney General*

**Deborah J. Daniels**  
*Assistant Attorney General*

**Sarah V. Hart**  
*Director, National Institute of Justice*

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For grant and funding information, contact:  
**Department of Justice Response Center**  
800-421-6770

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**Office of Justice Programs**  
**World Wide Web Site:**  
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov>

**National Institute of Justice**  
**World Wide Web Site:**  
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>

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# Solicitation for the Crime Laboratory Improvement Program for FY 2002

## I. Introduction

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Crime Laboratory Improvement Program (CLIP) establishes or improves the capabilities and capacities of State and local crime laboratories to conduct forensic analyses in support of the investigation and adjudication of crime. NIJ seeks proposals from States and units of local (i.e., county and municipal) governments for projects meeting the stated purposes of CLIP.

## II. Background

Forensic science is the application of established scientific techniques to the identification, collection, and examination of criminal evidence; the interpretation of laboratory findings; and the presentation of reported findings in judicial proceedings. Forensic evidence has played a crucial role in the investigation and resolution of thousands of violent crimes over the past several decades and its value as an investigative tool is likely to increase in the coming years.

Forensic science fields have greatly benefitted from recent breakthroughs in broader areas of science and technology. However, public laboratories often lack the resources to benefit from available new technologies and methods.

NIJ's first program dedicated to the forensic laboratory community, the Forensic DNA Laboratory Improvement Program, was established by the DNA Identification Act of 1994. As mandated by the Act, the Attorney General (through NIJ) made funds available to State and local governments to carry out projects intended to develop or improve the capability to analyze DNA evidence in forensic laboratories in support of the investigation and adjudication of crime. The program was authorized from Fiscal Year (FY) 1996 to FY 2000. During that period, grants

totaling more than \$39 million were awarded to more than 140 individual laboratory facilities in 48 States plus Puerto Rico. The result was procurement of upgraded laboratory equipment, training of personnel in new DNA testing methods, implementation of advanced testing methods, analysis of convicted offender samples, increased participation in the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS), evaluation of external blind proficiency testing, and an overall improvement in laboratory efficiency and analytical capacity.

Public crime labs frequently suffer from caseloads that exceed their capacities, often resulting in delayed reporting, creation of backlogs, and costly or time-consuming outsourcing. To address this problem, in FY 2000 NIJ expanded the Forensic DNA Laboratory Improvement Program to encompass a broader area of forensic laboratory testing. Now known as CLIP, this expanded program is intended to provide funding for *all* forensic disciplines to upgrade equipment and supplies, for training and education expenses, and for contractor-provided services during periods of in-house validation of new methods or when outsourcing is demonstrated as a more efficient method for conducting analysis.

## III. Program Policies and Priorities

In 2002, CLIP will focus on enhancing the efficiency and productivity of State and local crime laboratory operations. This solicitation seeks to improve the overall efficiency of evidence examination through streamlining, automation or semi-automation, reducing redundancy and re-analysis, and reduction in the time, labor, and costs needed for public crime laboratories to more effectively aid the investigative and legal processes. Applicants are encouraged to assess all aspects involved in evidentiary sample examination—from evidence receipt to reporting of results—and identify bottlenecks and general inefficiencies that

could be alleviated through CLIP funds. These aspects may include analytical as well as quality control and quality assurance and relevant administrative tasks (e.g., evidence logging, tracking, reporting). The result of CLIP funding must be a demonstrated improvement over current operations in areas such as output, turnaround times, staff hours, and/or costs in the section(s) of the lab where funds are focused.

The following are examples that may be considered when developing proposals. These examples are not exclusive. Rather they provide guidance for laboratory needs assessment and determining the best approach for enhancing overall laboratory efficiency and productivity:

- Automation or semi-automation of analytical tasks currently performed manually (e.g., robotic DNA extraction, addition of autosamplers to laboratory instrumentation, automatic pipettors).
- Replacement of manual documentation and recordkeeping processes with automated or electronic systems (e.g., bar code labeling of evidence, Laboratory Information Management Systems).
- Tasks not amenable to automation but could still be carried out more efficiently (e.g., locating and retrieving stored evidentiary items).
- Validation and implementation of in-house analytical tests that are currently outsourced.
- Outsourcing or contracting analytical or relevant administrative tasks during periods of in-house validation of new technologies or where outsourcing/contracting can be shown to improve efficiency or economy.
- Outsourcing or contracting quality assurance/quality control tasks (e.g., pipettor or balance calibration) to improve efficiency or economy.
- Additional instrumentation or computer equipment to increase concurrent analytical or data analyses.
- Upgraded analytical instrumentation, computer equipment, or software that will allow faster, more robust analyses or provide improved abilities to import data or interface with other systems.
- Additional frequently used items (e.g., pipettors, microscopes, hoods) so that analysts do not have to “wait in line” to perform essential parts of the testing process.
- Improved or upgraded test kits, reagents, or other supplies or support items that will allow increasingly comprehensive or discriminatory information to be obtained from evidentiary samples.
- Implementation of methods that will more quickly, thoroughly, or efficiently screen evidentiary items to locate probative samples for subsequent laboratory analysis.
- Implementation of methods that will reduce retesting or prevent unnecessary duplicate sample submission or analysis.
- External or contractor-provided education or training of laboratory personnel to increase the number of fully trained analysts while minimizing the need to draw on existing personnel resources for training support.
- Other contractor support such as process flow assessments.

Proposals must clearly and quantitatively demonstrate that requested funds will directly improve the efficiency and productivity of specific laboratory functions. When appropriate, proposals must include *specific measurable* outcomes. Such outcome measures might include decreases in turnaround time, reductions in backlogged samples, and staff hours saved. For example, if CLIP funds

are requested to reduce or eliminate a backlog in a specific area, you should identify the approximate current backlog and discuss how the requested funds will reduce or eliminate that backlog. If CLIP funds are requested to decrease the turnaround time of a specific analytical process, you should identify the current turnaround time and discuss how the CLIP funds will reduce it. Information may be presented in tabular or narrative form, or a combination of both.

NIJ is firmly committed to the competitive process for awarding grants, and proposals may be subject to independent review and evaluation. Individual awards will be limited to a maximum of \$250,000. The NIJ Director has final authority over funding decisions.

Applicants are encouraged to apply for funding under NIJ's *Convicted Offender DNA Backlog Reduction Program* or *No Suspect Casework DNA Backlog Reduction Program* for funding to reduce convicted offender and/or no-suspect casework DNA backlogs. Applications seeking CLIP funds for such purposes will be given a lower priority.

#### IV. Restrictions and Limitations on Use of Funds

The Act requires that the Federal share of grants made under this program shall not exceed **75 percent** of the total cost of the project described in the application. Furthermore, grant funds shall not be used to pay for State or local personnel costs. However, applicants may include the cost of laboratory personnel directly associated with the project as a credit toward the 25 percent minimum State or local match requirement. *Please note that the minimum match requirement is 25 percent of total project costs, not 25 percent of the Federal share.* To determine the minimum required match, divide your Federal request by three.

#### V. Allowable Expenditures

Expenditures from the Federal share may include the following:

- **Laboratory and Computer Equipment:** CLIP funds may be used for upgrading, replacing, and purchasing laboratory equipment, instrumentation, and computers for forensic analyses and data management.
- **Supplies:** CLIP funds may be used for acquiring laboratory supplies needed to perform analyses and to conduct validation studies, and other expenses directly attributable to conducting various types of forensic analyses.
- **Software:** CLIP funds may be used for acquiring new or upgraded software that is either necessary for replacing outdated software or will provide additional or more powerful information about the evidence.
- **Contractor-Provided Services:** Outsourcing or contracting of forensic services may be allowed under certain circumstances, including (1) during periods of in-house validation of new technologies or methods, or (2) if efficiency or economy would be increased by outsourcing/contracting certain tasks.
- **Travel and Training:** CLIP funds may be used for appropriate internal and external training and related travel expenses for continuing education/training opportunities or applicable graduate-level course work. The specific conference, course, or workshop will be evaluated to ensure appropriateness to the purpose of CLIP. The training must be directly applicable to the job position and duties of the individual(s) receiving the training.

- **Modifications to existing, functional space:** Funds for this purpose may be allowable (e.g., benches, cabinets, interior dividing walls, minor electrical and plumbing) but only when such expenses are necessary to accommodate required analytical equipment, materials storage, work flow, safety, or separation of particular analytical activities. While such minor renovations are allowed, *new construction is prohibited under CLIP.*

## VI. Program Performance Measures

To insure compliance with the Government Performance and Results Act, Public Law 103-62, this solicitation notifies applicants that NIJ's performance under this solicitation is measured by:

1. Number of labs establishing new forensic capabilities.
2. Number of labs expanding current forensic capabilities.
3. Number of labs experiencing reduction in time needed for evidence analysis.
4. Number of labs experiencing reduction in backlogged evidentiary sample analyses.
5. Number of labs providing continuing education or advanced training to crime lab analysts.

Award recipients will be required to collect and report data in support of these measures. Progress reports must contain information specifically detailing how CLIP funding enhanced the capabilities, capacities, speed, cost, or efficiency in each area of the lab where funds were applied.

Your assistance in obtaining this information will facilitate future program planning and will allow OJP to provide the Congress with measurable results of federally funded programs.

## VII. How to Apply

To apply, applicants first need two packets: (1) application forms (including a sample budget worksheet) and (2) guidelines for submitting proposals (including requirements for proposal writers and requirements for grant recipients). To receive them, applicants can:

- Download them from the NIJ Web site (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm>).
- Request hard copies by mail from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at 800-851-3420 or from the Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770 or 202-307-1480.
- Request copies by fax. Call 800-851-3420 and select option 1, then option 1 again for NIJ. Code is 1023.

Applicants must complete the required application forms and submit related required documents, including the following:

- **Standard Form (SF) 424—application for Federal assistance.** Applicants must include the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) on the SF 424. The CFDA number for the CLIP program is 16.564.
- **Geographic Areas Affected Worksheet**
- **Assurances**
- **Certifications Regarding Lobbying, Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters; and Drug-Free Workplace Requirements (one form)**
- **Disclosure of Lobbying Activities**
- **Budget Detail Worksheet**

- **Budget Narrative:** Applicants must provide a complete budget narrative for the project, including a discussion of the purpose for *every* item or service constituting the Federal request and the 25 percent State or local match. The budget narrative should describe the basis of the numbers presented on OJP Form 7150/1 (Budget Detail). See “How much detail should be included in the budget narrative?” in the Guidelines for Submitting Proposals for National Institute of Justice-Sponsored Research (available at [http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding\\_app.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding_app.htm)).
  - **Negotiated indirect rate agreement (if appropriate)**
  - **Names and affiliations of all key persons from applicant and subcontractor(s), advisors, consultants, and advisory board members.** Include name of principal investigator, title, organizational affiliation (if any), department (if institution of higher education), address, phone, and fax, and e-mail address
  - **Proposal abstract.** The proposal abstract, when read separately from the rest of the application, is meant to serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work. Applicants must concisely describe the project’s goals and objectives, project design, and methods for achieving the goals and objectives. Summaries of past accomplishments are to be avoided, and proprietary/confidential information is not to be included. Length is not to exceed 400 words. Use the following headers:  
     “Project Goals and Objectives:”  
     “Project Design and Methodology:”
  - **Table of contents**
  - **Program narrative or technical proposal:** Addresses the project objectives, the expected results, and the implementation approach. The program narrative demonstrates specifically and comprehensively how requested funds will improve laboratory efficiency and productivity *over current operations*. Include all *predicted measurable outcomes* that are expected to be achieved in each area where CLIP funds will be applied. The strength of a proposal is primarily demonstrated by information included in the program narrative. The “Program Narrative” part of the proposal must not exceed 30 double-spaced pages, no matter the amount of funding requested.
  - **Privacy certificate**
  - **Form 310 (Protection of Human Subjects Assurance Identification/Certification/Declaration).** NIJ has adopted new policies and procedures regarding the confidentiality of information and human subjects protection. Please see the *Guidelines for Submitting Proposals for National Institute of Justice-Sponsored Research* for details on the new requirements.
  - Environmental Assessment (if required)
  - Statutory Assurance Form (for laboratories requesting support for DNA analysis)
  - References
  - Letters of cooperation from organizations collaborating in the research project
  - Résumés of key individuals
  - Appendixes, if any (e.g., list of previous NIJ awards, their status, and products [in NIJ or other publications])
- Due date.** Completed proposals **must be received** at the National Institute of Justice by the close of business on **July 17, 2002**. Extensions of this deadline will not be permitted.

*NOTE:* NIJ continues to experience delays in delivery of U.S. mail. If you are sending time-sensitive materials to NIJ, and in particular proposals responding to NIJ solicitations, we recommend that you use an alternative to the U.S. Postal Service.

**Send completed forms to:**

Solicitation for Crime Laboratory Improvement  
Program for FY 2002  
National Institute of Justice  
810 Seventh Street N.W.  
Washington, DC 20531  
[overnight courier ZIP code 20001]

**Additional guidance and information.** Applicants who wish to receive additional guidance and information may contact the U.S. Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770. Center staff can provide assistance or refer applicants to an appropriate NIJ professional. Applicants may, for example, wish to discuss their prospective proposals with the NIJ professional staff.

**VIII. About Awards**

**Award period.** In general, NIJ limits its grants and cooperative agreements to a maximum period of 12 or 24 months. However, longer budget periods may be considered.

**Number of awards.** NIJ anticipates supporting multiple cooperative agreements and grants under this solicitation based upon available funding and peer-review recommendations.

**Award amount.** Awards totaling approximately \$4.8 million will be made available for this NIJ solicitation.

For more information on the National Institute of Justice, please contact:

National Criminal Justice Reference Service  
Box 6000  
Rockville, MD 20849-6000  
800-851-3420  
e-mail: askncjrs@ncjrs.org

You can view or obtain an electronic version of this document from the NCJRS Justice Information Center Web site (<http://www.ncjrs.org>) or the NIJ Web site (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>).

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