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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 2003*

### **Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Improvement Act: Solicitation for Discretionary Funding, FY 2003**

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:**

July 15, 2003

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

**John Ashcroft**  
*Attorney General*

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

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

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

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

## Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Improvement Act: Solicitation for Discretionary Funding, FY 2003

**Notice of online application requirement:** The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) requires you to submit your application for funding through the OJP **Grants Management System (GMS)**. Access through the Internet to this online GMS application system will expedite and streamline the receipt, review, and processing of requests for funding. Your final application will only be accepted through the online GMS applications system. To learn how to begin the online GMS application process, see the “How to Apply” section of this solicitation. A toll-free GMS Hotline telephone number (1-888-549-9901) has been established to provide technical assistance as you work through the online application process. The GMS Hotline may be called Monday through Friday between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m. eastern time.

**Notice of request for letters of intent:** To accommodate the volume of proposals submitted under this and other solicitations, NIJ requests that applicants send non-binding letters of intent by June 30, 2003. The Institute will use these letters to anticipate the number of peer panels needed and to identify possible conflicts of interest among peer panel reviewers.

There are two ways to notify us of your intent to submit an application: Send an email to [askost@ojp.usdoj.gov](mailto:askost@ojp.usdoj.gov), or send a letter via overnight courier (necessary due to delays in delivery of US mail) to: Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Improvement Act: Solicitation for Discretionary Funding, FY 2003, National Institute of Justice, Office of Science and Technology, 810 Seventh Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001 (overnight courier zip code).

### I. Introduction

The National Forensic Sciences Improvement Act (NFSIA) provides funds through a two-part grant program—a formula grant program (see FY 2003 NFSIA Information Memorandum for details) and a discretionary program. Under this solicitation, NIJ seeks proposals for discretionary funding from eligible States, Territories, and units of local government that have above-average rates of part-one violent crimes, as reported to the FBI by that State or Territory and published in the Uniform Crime Reports. Discretionary funds will be competitively awarded.

### II. Eligibility

The States and Territory listed in the table on the next page are eligible for funding under this solicitation.

Units of local government from discretionary-eligible States may apply to receive a discretionary award. These funds will be competitively awarded, and applications are not required to be sent through the State Administering Agency (SAA).

**Example for units of local government:** If you are a unit of local government from Florida, and you wish to receive NFSIA formula funding, you must contact your State Administering Agency (SAA) and inquire about being included in your State’s NFSIA formula application. If you are a unit of local government from Florida and you wish to apply for discretionary funding, you may apply directly to NIJ, since Florida is a discretionary-eligible State. If you are a unit of local government from a State that is not eligible for discretionary funding, you may **not** apply for discretionary funding.

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Eligible States and Territory			
#	Alabama	#	Massachusetts
#	Alaska	#	Michigan
#	Arizona	#	Missouri
#	California	#	Nevada
#	Delaware	#	New Mexico
#	District of Columbia	#	New York
#	Florida	#	North Carolina
#	Georgia	#	Oklahoma
#	Illinois	#	South Carolina
#	Louisiana	#	Tennessee
#	Maryland	#	Texas
		#	Virgin Islands

### III. Program Priorities

The goal of NFSIA discretionary funding is to improve the quality, timeliness, and credibility of forensic science and medical examiner services for criminal justice purposes.

Proposals must clearly demonstrate how the requested funds will improve the capacities and capabilities over current operations. Where appropriate, applicants must assess and articulate *specific, measurable* outcomes that are expected to be achieved, including such goals as decreases in turnaround time, reductions in backlogged samples, savings in man hours, and other similar results.

In the development of your proposal, the following questions should be used as guidelines to ensure that proposals are framed appropriately to achieve the goals of NFSIA. These questions need not be explicitly addressed in the proposal, but should be used as implicit themes to be considered in its preparation.

- P How will NFSIA funds be used to enhance the performance of crime laboratory personnel through advanced training and continuing education?
- P How will NFSIA funds be used to provide additional, more reliable, or more powerful (i.e., discriminatory) analytical testing,

thereby allowing more or better information to be obtained from the evidence?

- P How will NFSIA funds be used to decrease the turnaround time for forensic testing (through faster or more efficient processes), thereby enabling results to be reported to investigators in a more timely manner? Proposals should detail how these metrics will be determined and quantified.
- P How will NFSIA funds be used to improve the laboratory, where necessary, in order to obtain laboratory accreditation or certification? (Note that NFSIA funds may be used to make improvements to the laboratory that are required to address or correct deficiencies. NFSIA funds may also be used for fees and other costs involved with the initial accreditation/certification of the laboratory. NFSIA funds may not be used for re-accreditation/re-certification expenses).
- P How will NFSIA funds be used to reduce or eliminate current backlogs, or to prevent backlogs from developing due to increased requests for testing?
- P How will NFSIA funds be used to enhance the efficiency of the overall analytical process? Examples are the implementation of a laboratory information management system (LIMS) or the purchase of additional frequently used items such as pipettors, hoods, and microscopes so that analysts need not “wait in line” to perform essential parts of the testing process.

### IV. Required Elements of the Program

In general, the NFSIA program provides funding to crime laboratories and medical examiners' offices based on population and crime statistics. The program permits funding for expenses related to facilities, personnel, computerization, equipment, supplies, accreditation, certification, education, and training.

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NFSIA requires that States and units of local government receiving a grant under the program use the award to carry out all or a substantial part of a program to improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science or medical examiner services in the State. Included are services provided by laboratories or medical examiners' offices operated by the State and those operated by units of local government within the State. Funds may not be used for any general law enforcement or nonforensic investigatory function.

NFSIA requires that the State or unit of local government applying for funding submit a certification that the State or unit of local government has developed a plan for forensic science or medical examiner laboratories. The plan should specifically describe how the proposed funding would improve the quality or timeliness of forensic science or medical examiner services in the State or unit of local government. This State or unit of local government plan should be attached to the application. This program does not require State or local matching funds.

Since the funds received through NFSIA are to be used to improve the quality, timeliness, and credibility of forensic science services for criminal justice purposes, NIJ requires certification that the State or unit of local government within the State has either:

A. An established forensic science laboratory or laboratory system that:

- P Employs one or more full-time scientists whose principal duties are the examination of physical evidence in criminal matters for law enforcement agencies and who provide to the criminal justice system testimony with respect to such examination.
- P Employs generally accepted practices and procedures, as established by appropriate accrediting organizations.
- P Is accredited by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors-Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD-LAB), the National Association of Medical Examiners

(NAME), or other appropriate certifying bodies or will use a portion of the grant amount to prepare and apply for such accreditation by not later than 2 years after the date a grant is initially awarded.

Or:

B. A medical examiner's office (as defined by the National Association of Medical Examiners) that:

- P Employs generally accepted practices and procedures, as established by appropriate accrediting organizations.
- P Is accredited by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors-Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD-LAB), the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME), or other appropriate certifying bodies or will use a portion of the grant amount to prepare and apply for such accreditation by not later than two years after the date a grant is initially awarded.

Applicants are encouraged to assess all aspects of forensic evidence examination—from crime scene through laboratory analysis—to identify bottlenecks and general inefficiencies that could be alleviated with NFSIA funds. The result of NFSIA funding should be a demonstrated improvement over current operations in the average number of days between submission of a sample to a forensic science laboratory and the delivery of test results to the requesting office or agency.

## V. Allocation, Restrictions, and Limitations on Use of Funds

After a Congressionally enacted rescission of 0.65 percent, a total of \$4,967,500 is available for the NFSIA program for Fiscal Year 2003. Award amounts are predetermined according to the allocation criteria set forth in 42 U.S.C. § 37971 [section 2803(a)] for each fiscal year. Because funding distribution is based on fiscal year allocation, grant eligibility for all States will expire at the end of the 2003 fiscal year. Therefore, States and units of

local government that do not qualify, or that choose not to submit an application for the FY2003 NFSIA program by the June 30, 2003, deadline, will not be eligible to receive funds under the Fiscal Year 2003 program. Allocation criteria set forth in 42 U.S.C. § 37971 [section 2803(a)] are as follows:

Twenty-five percent (\$1,241,875) of the total amount made available to carry out the program will be allocated pursuant to the Attorney General's discretion to States, Territories, and units of local government with above-average rates for part 1 violent crimes. This rate is based on the average number of part 1 violent crimes reported by such State or Territory to the FBI for the 3 most recent calendar years for which such data are available.

**Please Note:** Only units of local government in States eligible to receive discretionary funding are able to apply directly to NIJ for such funding. (See Section II—Eligibility—for a list of eligible States).

Discretionary funds *may not* be used for any general law enforcement or nonforensic investigatory functions.

**Maximum Funding Limit:** In Fiscal Year 2003, \$1,241,875 will be allocated for NFSIA discretionary funding. However, each eligible State, Territory, and unit of local government may apply for no more than \$250,000 in funding.

**Proposal Review:** Fiscal Year 2003 NFSIA discretionary funds will be competitively awarded. All proposals should demonstrate *measurable* improvements in forensic services that would accrue if funds were awarded.

NIJ is firmly committed to a competitive process for making awards. All proposals are subjected to an independent peer-review panel evaluation. Peer review panelists consist of technologists from academia, industry, or Federal Government organizations, along with practitioners from Federal, State, and local criminal justice and public safety agencies. To the extent practical, panelists are selected to participate in individual peer panel reviews based on their expertise in subject areas that are

pertinent to the proposals to be evaluated within each respective peer panel. When peer panelists have completed their evaluations, they report to NIJ their assessment of each proposal's worthiness of award. Based on the panel's assessment, NIJ Program Management staff will recommend the award of individual proposals to the NIJ Director. The NIJ Director makes final award decisions.

## VI. How to Apply Using GMS

You must submit your application(s) through the OJP's automated **Grants Management System (GMS)**, an online system accessible through the Internet. It is intended to expedite and streamline the receipt, review, and processing of applications. We only accept your final application through our online GMS applications system. Call the GMS Hotline toll-free to receive technical assistance about the online application process: 1-888-549-9901. You may call the GMS Hotline Monday through Friday between the 7 a.m. and 9 p.m. eastern time. To use the GMS system, complete the following steps:

### Step 1.

On the Internet, go to <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/fundopps.htm>. Here, you may link directly to OJP's Grants Management System (GMS). The online ***GMS Application Procedures Handbook*** is also available online on this page. We strongly encourage you to review this handbook before beginning your GMS electronic application, as it includes step-by-step instructions for the application process.

### Step 2.

Select "**Logon directly to the Grants Management System (GMS)**" to apply for grant funding.

### Step 3.

If you have not previously used GMS, click on "**New User? Register Here**" and follow the on-screen instructions to register with GMS. After you register, select "**FY03 NIJ NFSIA Discretionary**" for discretionary applications. (See Section II to

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determine your eligibility for discretionary funding.)

If you are not a new user and have a GMS password, click on “**Login.**” If your password has expired, an “Authentication Error” or “Unauthorized User” message will appear on the screen. In this case, click on “Having Login Problems?” for assistance in updating your password.

**Please Note:** Applicants must ensure that the information about the authorizing official and alternate contact is entered correctly. The authorizing official is the individual authorized to accept grant funds in your organization (e.g., executive director, attorney general, governor). If the individual applying online is not the signing authority, that individual *must* list the authorizing official’s name and contact information where appropriate.

## Step 4.

Complete the online application, including the three required file attachments: Budget Detail Worksheet, Program Narrative, and Other Program Attachments (other forms required by NIJ). See below for details on creating each of these attachments. After you submit the final application, the online system will inform you that the application has been received and sent to NIJ. The GMS system will provide an application identification number for future reference.

Note: It is OJP’s practice to accept documents through GMS and consider the entire submission to be under the GMS applicant’s online, electronically signed, submission of the grant application package. Thus, signatures are not required on forms included in Other Program Attachments.

If you have questions about GMS or need technical assistance with applying online, contact the **GMS**

**Hotline at 1–888–549–9901, Monday–Friday, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. eastern time** (except Federal holidays).

## Required Forms and Documents

Individuals interested in submitting proposals in response to this announcement must complete the required application forms and related documents. You will complete some of the forms shown as part of the development of your user profile during the GMS online application process; other forms must be attached to your application file on GMS (**GMS will not accept zip files or executable files**). **Note:** Proposals containing maps, tables, digital photos, and other types of graphics will produce large file sizes that may affect the speed of transfer. Please take this into consideration when submitting your proposal online.

Please use the “Checklist for Application” at [http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/checklist\\_for\\_application.pdf](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/checklist_for_application.pdf) to ensure that your application is complete.

## National Environmental Policy Act

**Requirement.** All award recipients must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (Public Law 91-190, codified at 42 U.S.C. § 4321 et seq.). To ensure NEPA compliance, NIJ may require some award recipients to submit additional information.

**Program Narrative.** The program narrative addresses the project objectives, the expected results, and the implementation approach. The program narrative must specifically describe how expenditures of grant funds will augment the implementation or utility of the consolidated State forensic science plan. The program narrative should also demonstrate, specifically and comprehensively, how requested funds will improve laboratory efficiency and productivity *over current operations*. The program narrative must not exceed 30 double-spaced pages, no matter the amount of funding.

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**Proposal Abstract.** The proposal abstract is a very important part of the application. When read separately from the rest of the application, the abstract should serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work. Applicants should concisely describe project goals and objectives, project plans, and methods for achieving the goals. Once an award has been granted, the abstract is computerized and serves as a summary available to all interested parties for the duration of the grant. In addition, the Proposal Abstract is used in sorting Coverdell discretionary applications for review by an appropriate independent peer panel.

**Due Date.** Complete proposals must be submitted through the online GMS application system by 9 p.m. eastern time on **July 15, 2003**. Extensions to this deadline are not permitted. NIJ will not accept faxed or mailed proposals. NIJ reserves the right to reject incomplete applications, those not responsive to the scope of this announcement, or those not complying with format requirements.

**CFDA Number.** The CFDA number for this solicitation is 16.560.

**Guidance and Information.** Applicants who want 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 who have questions about GMS or need technical assistance with applying online can contact the **GMS Hotline at 1-888-549-9901**, Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. eastern time (except Federal holidays).

**Confidentiality of information and human subjects protection.** NIJ has adopted new policies and procedures regarding the confidentiality of information and human subjects protection. Details on the requirements are available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/humansubjects/index.html>. (NFSIA projects do not usually involve

activities that fall within the purview of privacy and human subjects rules and regulations. You may, however, still consider reading these policies and procedures in order to determine if your planned activities fall within these rules).

**Record Maintenance and Access.** Each State or local unit of government within the State that receives funding under this program will maintain records relating to the receipt and use of the total grant amount. The Attorney General and the Comptroller General of the United States (or designee thereof) will have access to these records for audit and examination purposes.

**Reporting Requirement.** NFSIA requires each State that receives a grant to submit a report within 180 days of the end of the award period. The report will include a summary and assessment of the program carried out with the grant, and cite the average number of days between submission of a sample to a forensic science laboratory and the delivery of test results to a requesting office or agency.

This requirement is in addition to other OJP grant reporting requirements. See the OJP Office of the Comptroller's "Post Award Instructions" Web page (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/oc/postaward>) for more details.

## VII. Performance Measures

To ensure 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 the number of forensic labs with improved analytic and technological resources. Award recipients will be required to collect and report data in support of this measure.

**SL 000615**



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

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

**National Criminal Justice Reference Service**

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

If you have questions, call or e-mail NCJRS.

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NIJ is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime.