

Notices regarding the solicitation “NIJ National Center on Forensics, Fiscal Year 2020”

April 24, 2020: On April 21, 2020, NIJ hosted a webinar that provided an overview and discussion of the program. The slides and transcript from this webinar have been added to the end of this document.

April 20, 2020: “Certain qualified individuals” were removed from the types of eligible applicants.

April 20, 2020: A typographical error on page 19 was addressed.

The original solicitation document begins on the next page.



NIJ National Center on Forensics, Fiscal Year 2020

FY 2020 Competitive Grant Solicitation

CFDA No. 16.560

Grants.gov Solicitation Number: NIJ-2020-18372

Solicitation Release Date: April 6, 2020

Application Deadline: 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on June 5, 2020

The [U.S. Department of Justice](#) (DOJ), [Office of Justice Programs](#) (OJP), [National Institute of Justice](#) (NIJ) is seeking applications for funding for competitive funding under the FY 2020 NIJ National Center on Forensics. This program furthers the Department's mission by providing resources to support development, education, and training opportunities in the forensic science, medico-legal, law enforcement, and legal communities.

This solicitation incorporates the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) by reference. The OJP Grant Application Resource Guide provides guidance to applicants on how to prepare and submit applications for funding to OJP. **If this solicitation expressly modifies any provision in the OJP Grant Application Resource Guide, the applicant is to follow the guidelines in this solicitation as to that provision.**

Eligibility (Who may apply):

In general, NIJ is authorized to make grants to, or enter into contracts or cooperative agreements with eligible entities as listed below:

- States (including territories);
- Units of local government;
- Federally recognized Indian tribal governments (as determined by the Secretary of the Interior) that perform law enforcement functions;
- Nonprofit and for-profit organizations (including tribal nonprofit and for-profit organizations); and
- Institutions of higher education (including tribal institutions of higher education).

Foreign governments, foreign organizations, and foreign colleges and universities are not eligible to apply.

For-profit organizations must agree to forgo any profit or management fee. Foreign governments, foreign organizations, and foreign institutions of higher education are not eligible to apply.

NIJ may elect to make awards for applications submitted under this solicitation in future fiscal years, dependent on the merit of the applications and on the availability of appropriations.

All recipients and subrecipients (including any for-profit organization) must forgo any profit or management fee.

NIJ will consider applications under which two or more entities would carry out the federal award; however, only one entity may be the applicant. Any others must be proposed as subrecipients (subgrantees). The applicant must be the entity that would have primary responsibility for carrying out the award, including administering the funding and managing the entire project. For additional information on subawards, see the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#).

Contact Information

For technical assistance with submitting an application, contact the Grants.gov Customer Support Hotline at 1-800-518-4726 or 1-606-545-5035 (international), at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support.html>, or at support@grants.gov. The Grants.gov Support Hotline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, except on federal holidays.

An applicant that experiences unforeseen Grants.gov technical issues beyond its control that prevent it from submitting its application by the deadline must email the NIJ contact identified below **within 24 hours after the application deadline** to request approval to submit its application after the deadline. Additional information on reporting technical issues appears under “Experiencing Unforeseen Grants.gov Technical Issues” in the How to Apply (Grants.gov) section in the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#).

For assistance with any other requirements of this solicitation, contact the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) Response Center: toll-free at 1-800-851-3420; via TTY at 301-240-6310 (hearing impaired only); email grants@ncjrs.gov; fax to 301-240-5830; or web chat at <https://webcontact.ncjrs.gov/ncjchat/chat.jsp>. The NCJRS Response Center operates from 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. eastern time, Monday through Friday, and from 10:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time on the solicitation close date. General information on applying for NIJ awards can be found at www.nij.gov/funding/Pages/welcome.aspx. Answers to frequently asked questions that may assist applicants are posted at www.nij.gov/funding/Pages/faqs.aspx; some are included in the appendices of this solicitation.

Deadline Details

Applicants must register with Grants.gov at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html> prior to submitting an application. All applications are due by 11:59 p.m. eastern time on June 5, 2020.

To be considered timely, an application must be submitted by the application deadline using Grants.gov, and the applicant must have received a validation message from Grants.gov that indicates successful and timely submission. OJP urges applicants to submit applications at least 72 hours prior to the application due date to allow time for the applicant to receive validation messages or rejection notifications from Grants.gov and to correct in a timely fashion any problems that may have caused a rejection notification.

An applicant must use the **Add Attachment** button to attach a file to its application. Do not click the paperclip icon to attach files. This action will not attach the files to the application. After adding an attachment, select the **View Attachment** button to confirm you attached the correct file. To remove the file, select the **Delete Attachment** button.

OJP encourages all applicants to read this [Important Notice: Applying for Grants in Grants.gov](#).

For additional information, see the “How to Apply (Grants.gov)” section in the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#).

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NIJ National Center on Forensics, Fiscal Year 2020

CFDA No. 16.560

A. Program Description

Overview

With this solicitation, NIJ seeks proposals from qualified applicants to establish and operate the NIJ National Center on Forensics to:

1. Facilitate a partnership amongst:
 - a. A full-service State department of forensic science with a medical examiner function;
 - b. An accredited university of higher education with affiliate medical and law schools; and
 - c. A statewide district attorneys association.
2. For the purpose of:
 - a. Providing medico-legal learning opportunities for medical students to train as deputy medical examiners/coroners in underserved rural areas;
 - b. Providing forensic science and legal training to district attorneys, judges, and law enforcement; and
 - c. Developing opportunities, as appropriate, amongst the designated partners to benefit current and future practitioners in the field.

Statutory Authority: Title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (sections 201 and 202), the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (sections 231-233, 235), 28 U.S.C. 530C, and the Department of Justice Appropriations Act, 2020 (Public Law 116-93).

Program-Specific Information

NIJ is the federal government's lead agency for forensic science research and development and the administration of programs that improve laboratory efficiency. The mission of NIJ's Office of Investigative and Forensic Sciences (OIFS) is to improve the quality and practice of forensic science through innovative solutions that support research and development, testing and evaluation, technology, information exchange, and the development of resources for the criminal justice community.

Forensic science is a multidisciplinary field involving the application of sciences such as physics, chemistry, biology, pathology, computer science, and engineering to matters of law. It, moreover, involves the methods and tools for collecting, preserving, examining, and interpreting

evidence and the related educational/training programs that improve the science and the use of science within criminal justice agencies.

The NIJ National Center on Forensics, under the guidance of NIJ, will be charged with establishing collaborations and/or partnerships with agencies including, but not limited to, institutions of higher learning with affiliate medical and law schools, publicly funded forensic science laboratories, and statewide district attorneys' associations to provide medico-legal learning opportunities for medical students to train as deputy medical examiners/coroners in underserved rural areas; provide forensic science and legal training to district attorneys, judges, law enforcement, and others with an appropriate background; and develop opportunities as appropriate, amongst the designated partners to benefit current and future practitioners in the field, such as forensic pathologists/medical examiners, forensic scientists, district attorneys, and law enforcement, or others as approved by NIJ.

Note: For the purposes of this solicitation, higher education institutions are defined as colleges, universities, and community colleges that are accredited by an appropriate higher education accreditation organization. Proposals will be strengthened by collaborations with institutions that have additionally obtained accreditation from organizations such as the Forensic Science Education Programs Accreditation Commission (FEPAC), Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), or other appropriate accreditation programs related to the forensic sciences.

As part of the program proposal, the NIJ National Center on Forensics should designate a director who has the knowledge, skills, abilities, and vision to lead their team; and should have an internal management structure (and demonstrated partnerships with any proposed subrecipients) capable of supporting the education, training, and service missions of the NIJ National Center on Forensics.

Goals, Objectives, and Deliverables

The goal of establishing a NIJ National Center on Forensics is to support development, education, and training opportunities in the forensic science, medico-legal, law enforcement, and legal communities.

The NIJ National Center on Forensics and its partners will use their capabilities and expertise to develop, analyze, advance, and provide educational/training opportunities through, but not limited to, the following objectives and activities:

- **Providing scientific and technical learning opportunities for the medico-legal community specifically targeted for medical students, and focused on underserved rural areas.** The NIJ National Center on Forensics will serve as a centralized innovative center to encourage engagement of medical students to train as deputy medical examiners/coroners in underserved rural areas. As outlined in the NIJ Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices Report to Congress in December 2019 (pg. 72), *“The overwhelming need identified by the medico-legal death investigator (MDI) community is the extreme national shortage of practicing board-certified forensic pathologists (BCFPs) who are*

trained and qualified to perform forensic autopsies".¹ Given the importance of this field and the difficulty of recruiting and retaining qualified individuals, the NIJ National Center on Forensics is expected to develop methods by which to provide effective learning opportunities with a focus on increasing the number of medical students pursuing a career in the forensic pathology field. The NIJ National Center on Forensics is also expected to analyze these learning methods, to the extent practicable, to identify best practices. Furthermore, various scientific and technical trainings will be developed to include topics relevant to underserved rural areas (including tribal lands), covering topics which may include preparing, applying, achieving, and maintaining appropriate accreditation and/or specialty certifications (ABMDI, ABC, etc.); opioid/NPS response, and/or mass fatality disaster management.

- **Providing forensic science and legal training, information, and support to law enforcement, district judges, and other appropriate criminal justice agencies.** The NIJ National Center on Forensics is expected to provide specialized training relevant to the intersection of forensic science and law. These efforts may include providing workshops on emerging techniques used in forensic science, webinars, or peer-reviewed articles addressing forensic science in recent or relevant legal rulings and foundational information regarding legal considerations for the use of forensic science in the courtroom. The NIJ National Center on Forensics will provide national expertise for the criminal justice community's ongoing efforts to continuously improve the understanding and application of forensic science for law enforcement and the legal community. Under NIJ guidance, the NIJ National Center on Forensics may interface with the DOJ National Advocacy Center (NAC) to coordinate forensic science information for the legal community.
- **Developing, consolidating, and providing access to resources and opportunities for education, training, and best practices in the forensic science community, structured to benefit current and future practitioners in the field.** NIJ National Center on Forensics efforts should include methods by which to understand the needs of forensic pathologists/medical examiners, forensic scientists, district attorneys, and law enforcement practitioners, and from this, develop comprehensive opportunities that will benefit both current and future practitioners. Resources and opportunities will be referenced and developed in consideration of the variety of challenges facing forensic science in various communities, from small, rural, and/or tribal entities, to city, county, and state agencies. Training topics will include evidence-based research addressing topics in forensic science, including, but not limited to, advances in research, relevant implementation efforts, applicable court rulings, and standardization or best practices. Topics will be developed in coordination with partners within the NIJ National Center on Forensics and initiated with NIJ approval.

The NIJ National Center on Forensics should expect that the majority of its work will be on projects specifically defined and/or approved by NIJ, in support of the above listed objectives, as well as those identified in the NIJ Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices Report to Congress.² For this reason and others (such as changes in

¹ National Institute of Justice, (2019). *Report to Congress: Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices*, Report prepared for U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gov/olp/page/file/1228306/download>.

² Ibid.

the availability of funds; changes to the legal landscape; promulgation of new forensic technologies, or the desire to capitalize on technology opportunities), applicants should expect that the level of effort may vary significantly during the project period (or from year-to-year, should supplemental funding be made available). The successful applicant therefore must demonstrate the ability to add or reduce capacity in relevant areas without adversely affecting the ability to provide services or incurring unacceptable additional costs. In this connection, NIJ is very interested in entertaining applications that propose to leverage existing programs, facilities, and personnel.

Briefing. An NIJ briefing to be delivered in Washington, D.C. is required approximately thirty (30) days prior to the grant end date. Presentation materials including a handout and PowerPoint slides that summarize activities and accomplishments of the NIJ National Center on Forensics are due in draft form no later than ten (10) business days in advance of the briefing, for NIJ to review.

Final Research Report. Any recipient of an award under this solicitation will be expected to submit a final research report. Additional information on the final research report requirement for the solicitation is posted on the [Research, Development, and Evaluation Grant Award Requirements](#) section on NIJ's website.

All protocols, standard operating procedures, methods, training materials, and reports produced as a result of an award under this solicitation will be made publicly available by NIJ. NIJ expects that there will be an equal effort to make applicable products resulting from this program accessible to practitioner and policymaker audiences through articles in trade publications, the development of training manuals, policy briefs, conferences, webinars, and articles for newspapers or magazines.

The Goals, Objectives, and Deliverables are directly related to the performance measures that demonstrate the results of the work completed, as discussed under [What an Application Should Include](#).

Performance Measures

OJP will require each successful applicant to submit regular performance data that demonstrate the results of the work carried out under the award (see "[General Information about Post-Federal Award Reporting Requirements](#)" in [Section F. Federal Award Administration Information](#)).

Applicants should visit OJP's performance measurement page at www.ojp.gov/performance for an overview of performance measurement activities at OJP.

The application should demonstrate the applicant's understanding of the performance data reporting requirements for this grant program and detail how the applicant will gather the required data should it receive funding.

Please note that applicants are **not** required to submit performance data with the application. Performance measures information is included as an alert that successful applicants will be required to submit performance data as part of the reporting requirements under an award.

Objective	Performance Measure(s)	Data Recipient Provides
Develop and disseminate medico-legal training opportunities for medical students to train as deputy medical examiners/coroners in underserved rural areas	Number of curricula developed	Number of training curricula: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed • Pilot tested • Revised after
	Number of trainings conducted	Number of trainings (by type): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person • Web-based/remote • CD/DVD • Peer-to-peer • Workshop • Other
	Number of participants who attended the trainings	Number of individuals who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended the training (in-person) or started the training (web-based) • Completed the training • Completed an evaluation at the conclusion of the training • Completed an evaluation and rated the training as satisfactory or better
	Percentage of participants who successfully completed the training	
	Percentage of participants who rated the training as satisfactory or better	
Provide forensic science and/or legal training to district attorneys, judges, and law enforcement	Number of curricula developed	Number of training curricula: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed • Pilot tested • Revised after
	Number of trainings conducted	Number of trainings (by type): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person • Web-based/remote • CD/DVD • Peer-to-peer • Workshop • Other
	Number of participants who attended the trainings	Number of individuals who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended the training (in-person) or started the training (web-based) • Completed the training • Completed an evaluation at the conclusion of the training • Completed an evaluation and rated the training as satisfactory or better
	Percentage of participants who successfully completed the training	
	Percentage of participants who rated the training as satisfactory or better	
Develop opportunities, as appropriate, amongst the designated partners to benefit current and future practitioners in the field	Number and type of training/opportunities developed	Number of each type of curricula developed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational • Career enhancement • Entry level

Objective	Performance Measure(s)	Data Recipient Provides
	Number of trainings/opportunities produced	Number of trainings/opportunities (by type): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person • Web-based/remote • CD/DVD • Peer-to-peer • Workshop • Other
	Number of participants who attended the trainings	Number of individuals who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended the training (in-person) or started the training (web-based) • Completed the training • Completed an evaluation at the conclusion of the training • Completed an evaluation and rated the training as satisfactory or better
	Percentage of participants who successfully completed the training	
	Percentage of participants who rated the training as satisfactory or better	

B. Federal Award Information

Maximum number of awards NIJ expects to make: 1

Estimated maximum dollar amount for each award: \$2,000,000.00

Total amount anticipated to be awarded under solicitation: \$2,000,000.00

Period of performance start date: 01/01/2020

Period of performance duration: 36 months

Total funding for this solicitation and the number of awards made will depend on the availability of funds, the quality of the applications, and other pertinent factors. Applicants should propose costs using calculations based on the specific activities proposed in the narratives. Costs estimates should be focused on maximizing the potential for success of the proposed program.

An applicant should base its federal funding request and period of performance on the actual requirements of the program, and not necessarily on the anticipated amount of funding available in FY 2020 under this solicitation. However, to expedite the budget approval process, applicants are encouraged to break out their budgets by project year or by phases in the event that NIJ chooses to fund the project partially or incrementally.

To allow time for (among other things) any necessary post-award review and financial clearance by OJP of the proposed budget and for any associated responses or other action(s) that may be required of the recipient, applicants should propose an award start date of January 1, 2021.

If the applicant is proposing a project that reasonably could be conducted in discrete phases, with each phase resulting in completion of one or more significant, defined milestones, then NIJ strongly recommends that the applicant structure the application — specifically including the narrative, expected scholarly products, timelines/milestones, and budget detail worksheet and

budget narrative — to clearly define each phase. (This is particularly the case if the applicant proposes a project that will exceed — in cost or the length of the period of performance — the amount or length of time anticipated for an individual award under this solicitation.)

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit realistic proposals, including a reasonable project timeline and end date, as project extensions may not be granted.

Applications proposing programs involving partnerships with other agencies or organizations, such as publicly funded forensic laboratories or institutions of higher learning, must include a strong letter of cooperation/support or administrative agreement, signed by an appropriate decision-making authority from each proposed, partnering agency. If selected for award, grantees will be expected to have a formal agreement in place with partnering agencies by January 1, 2021.

NIJ may, in certain cases, provide additional funding in future years to awards made under this solicitation, through continuation awards. OJP will consider, among other factors, OJP's strategic priorities, a recipient's overall management of the award, and progress of award-funded work, when making continuation award decisions.

Under this solicitation, only one application by any particular applicant entity will be considered. An entity may, however, be proposed as a subrecipient (subgrantee) in more than one application.

NIJ may elect to fund applications submitted under this FY 2020 solicitation in future fiscal years, dependent on, among other considerations, the merit of the applications and on the availability of appropriations.

All awards are subject to the availability of appropriated funds and to any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law.

Type of Award

NIJ expects to make awards under this solicitation as cooperative agreements, which provide for OJP to have substantial involvement in carrying out award activities. See the "Administrative, National Policy, and Other Legal Requirements" section of the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide for additional information](#).

Financial Management and System of Internal Controls

Award recipients and subrecipients (including recipients or subrecipients that are pass-through entities) must, as described in the Part 200 Uniform Requirements³ as set out at 2 C.F.R. 200.303, comply with standards for financial and program management. See [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

³ The "Part 200 Uniform Requirements" means the DOJ regulation at 2 C.F.R. Part 2800, which adopts (with certain modifications) the provisions of 2 C.F.R. Part 200.

Budget Information

What will not be funded:

1. Proposals primarily to purchase equipment, materials, or supplies. The budget may include these items if they are necessary for the success of the proposed program. Proposals that include equipment purchases should include a discussion of how federally funded equipment is proposed to be used after the funded work has been completed and/or the project period has ended. Note that OJP may issue specific equipment disposition instructions in appropriate circumstances.
2. Work that will be funded under another specific solicitation.
3. Proposals that are not responsive to this specific solicitation.
4. Applications that do not demonstrate the capability to perform the work proposed.

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

This solicitation does not require a match.

Please see the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for information on the following:

- [Pre-agreement Costs \(also known as Pre-award Costs\)](#)
- [Limitation on Use of Award Funds for Employee Compensation; Waiver](#)
- [Prior Approval, Planning, and Reporting of Conference/Meeting/Training Costs](#)
- [Costs Associated with Language Assistance](#) (if applicable)

C. Eligibility Information

For eligibility information, see title page.

For information on cost sharing or match requirements, see “[What an Application Should Include](#)” in [Section D. Application and Submission Information](#).

D. Application and Submission Information

This solicitation expressly modifies the OJP Grant Application Resource Guide by not incorporating the “Disclosure of Process Related to Executive Compensation” provisions in the “Application Attachments” section of the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#).

What an Application Should Include

The following application elements MUST be included in the application submission for an application to meet the basic minimum requirements (BMR) to advance to peer review and receive consideration for funding: Program Narrative, Budget Detail Worksheet (including Budget Narrative), and résumés/curriculum vitae of key personnel.

See the “[Application Elements and Formatting Instructions](#)” section of the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for information on what happens to an application that does not contain all the specified elements or that is nonresponsive to the scope of the solicitation.

1. Application for Federal Assistance (Standard Form (SF)-424)

The SF-424 is a required standard form used as a cover sheet for submission of pre-applications, applications, and related information. See the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information on completing the SF-424.

Intergovernmental Review: This solicitation (“funding opportunity”) **is not** subject to [Executive Order 12372](#). (In completing the SF-424, an applicant is to answer question 19 by selecting the response that the “Program is not covered by E.O. 12372.”)

2. Project Abstract

The project abstract is a very important part of the application, and serves as an introduction to the proposed project. If the application is funded, the project abstract typically will become public information and be used to describe the project.

Applications should include a high-quality project abstract (no more than 400 words) that summarizes the proposed project including primary activities, products and deliverables, the service area, and who will benefit. Project abstracts should be:

- Written for a general public audience.
- Submitted as a separate attachment with “Project Abstract” as part of its file name.
- A single-spaced Word document, using a standard 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins.

As a separate attachment, the project abstract will not count against the page limit for the program narrative.

3. Program Narrative

The program narrative section of the application should not exceed 14 double-spaced pages in 12-point font with 1-inch margins, of which a **minimum** of 7 pages should be dedicated to the description of the project/program design and implementation. If included in the main body of the program narrative, tables, charts, figures, and other illustrations count toward the 14-page limit for the narrative section. The project abstract, table of contents, appendices, and government forms do not count toward the 14-page limit.

The program narrative should be attached as a separate file with an appropriately descriptive file name.

If the program narrative fails to comply with these length-related restrictions, NIJ may negatively consider such noncompliance in peer review and in final award decisions.

The following sections should be included as part of the program narrative.⁴

Program Narrative Guidelines:

a. Title Page (not counted against the 14-page program narrative limit)

The title page should include:

- Project title.
- Submission date.
- Funding opportunity number.
- Principal Investigator (and any co-principal investigators).
- Unique author identifier (e.g., [ORCID](#), [ResearcherID](#), [Scopus Author ID](#)), if available.
- Key words, including forensic science focus areas.
- Contact information (that is, name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address) for both the applicant and the principal investigator.

b. Table of Contents and Figures (not counted against the 14-page program narrative limit)

c. Main Body

The main body of the program narrative should describe the proposed project in depth. The following sections should be included as part of the program narrative:

- Statement of the Problem and Research Questions. The statement of the problem should address the purpose, goals, and objectives of the proposed project. Applicants should discuss current gaps in data, research, and knowledge, including those for particular justice sectors, for certain populations, and to answer questions relevant to current policy and practice needs and public interests. As part of this discussion, applicants should present a review of previous literature and discuss previous efforts related to these problems. The statement of the problem should:
 - Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field proposed.

⁴ As noted earlier, if the proposed program or project reasonably could be conducted in discrete phases, with each phase resulting in completion of one or more significant, defined milestones, then NIJ strongly recommends that the applicant structure the application – specifically including the narrative, expected products, timelines/milestones, and budget detail worksheet and budget narrative – to set out each phase clearly. (In appropriate cases, the expected scholarly product(s) from a particular phase may vary from those described above.) See generally “Goals, Objectives, Deliverables, and Expected Scholarly Products” under “Program-Specific Information,” above.

- Explain how the proposed program may improve forensic practice through scientific knowledge and/or technical capability. Describe how concepts, methods, technologies, or services that drive the forensic science field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.

This section should also identify and discuss the purpose, goals, and objectives of the proposed NIJ National Center on Forensics.

- Project Design and Implementation. This section should account for a minimum of seven (7) pages of the main body of the narrative. Applicants should provide a detailed description of the strategies to implement the NIJ National Center on Forensics. Design elements should follow directly from the project's goals and objectives, and address the program-specific information noted on page 5. Applicants should describe the concept in detail and demonstrate the validity and usefulness of the data they will collect. Applicants should consider the rigor and soundness of the concept and technical approaches for the proposed program, and address the feasibility of the proposed program and potential challenges or problems in carrying out the activities. This section should:
 - State concisely the goals of the proposed NIJ National Center on Forensics.
 - Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and/or analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the program. Include how training products and/or educational opportunities will be developed, presented, disseminated, and any resource-sharing plans as appropriate.
- Potential Impact. Applicants should describe the potential impact of the NIJ National Institute on Forensics, and how it may inform or improve criminal justice-related policy, practice, or theory in the United States. Applicants should:
 - Summarize the expected outcome(s), including the impact that the results of the proposed NIJ Center on Forensics will exert on the discipline(s) involved.
 - Explain the criminal justice significance of the proposed NIJ National Center on Forensics.
 - Explain how the application challenges, and seeks to shift, current forensic practice paradigms.
 - Describe in detail plans for presentations, publications, and other media use for dissemination of information related to the proposed NIJ National Center on Forensics and its work products.
- Capabilities/Competencies. This section should describe the experience and capability of the applicant organization, key staff, and any proposed subgrantees (including consultants) that the applicant will use to implement and manage this effort and the federal funds under this award, highlighting any previous experience implementing projects of similar scope, design, and magnitude. Applicants should outline the management plan and organization that connects to the goals and objectives of the project. Applicants should address:

- Facilities and other resources: Describe how the environment in which the program will be implemented contributes to the probability of success (e.g., institutional support, physical resources, and intellectual rapport). In describing the environment in which the NIJ National Center on Forensics will be based, discuss ways in which the proposed training opportunities, etc. will benefit from unique features of the environment or subject populations or will employ useful collaborative arrangements. If there are multiple performance sites, describe the resources available at each site.
- Equipment: List major items of equipment/resources/infrastructure already available for this project and, if appropriate, identify location and pertinent capabilities.
- Senior/key personnel profile: Describe each senior/key personnel member's role in the project, and why the individual is well-suited for that role. The relevant factors may include: aspects of past training; previous experimental work on this specific topic or related topics; technical expertise; collaborators or scientific environment; and/or past performance in this or related fields. Senior/key personnel are defined as all individuals who contribute in a substantive, meaningful way to the scientific development or execution of the project, whether or not salaries are requested. Consultants should be included if they meet this definition.
 - Principal investigator (PI) profile should be listed first.
 - Any remaining senior/key personnel profiles should be listed in alphabetical order. While alphabetical order is preferred, it is not required. However, be aware that these profiles will appear in the application in the order provided by the applicant. Therefore, peer reviewers will see them in the order presented. Those with a postdoctoral/postgraduate role should be included.
 - Other significant contributors (OSCs): OSCs are those individuals who commit to contribute to the scientific development or execution of the project, but do not commit any specified measurable effort (i.e., person months) to the project. These individuals are typically presented at effort of "zero person months" or "as needed." Individuals with measurable effort may not be listed as OSCs. Consultants should be included if they meet the OSC definition. OSCs should be listed after all senior/key persons.
- Experience, expertise, and capability to develop, advance, analyze, and provide educational/training opportunities in support of the National Center on Forensics.
- Experience producing and disseminating meaningful deliverables.

d. Appendices (not counted against the 14-page program narrative limit) include:

- Bibliography/references.
- Any tools/instruments, questionnaires, tables/charts/graphs, or maps pertaining to the proposed project that are supplemental to such items included in the main body of the narrative.

- Curriculum vitae or resume of the principal investigator and any and all co-principal investigators. In addition, curriculum vitae, resume, or biographical sketches of all other individuals (regardless of “investigator” status) who will be significantly involved in substantive aspects of the proposed project (including, for example, individuals such as statisticians used to conduct proposed data analysis).
- To assist OJP in assessing actual or apparent conflicts of interest (including such conflicts on the part of prospective reviewers of the application, a complete list of the individuals named or otherwise identified anywhere in the application (including in the budget or in any other attachment) who will or may work (or advise or consult) on the proposed project. This applies to all such individuals, including, for example, individuals who are or would be employees of the applicant or employees of any proposed subrecipient entity, any individuals who themselves may be a subrecipient, and individuals who may (or will) work without compensation (such as advisory board members). This appendix to the program narrative is to include, for each listed individual: name, title, employer, any other potentially-pertinent organizational affiliation(s), and the individual's proposed roles and responsibilities in carrying out the proposed project. If the application identifies any specific entities or organizations (other than the applicant) that will or may work (or advise or consult) on the proposed project, without also naming any associated individuals, the name of each such organization also should be included on this list.

Applicants should use the “[Proposed Project Staff, Affiliation, and Roles](#)” form available on the NIJ webpage to prepare this list.

If the application (including the budget) identifies any proposed non-competitive agreements that are or may be considered procurement “contracts” (rather than subawards) for purposes of federal grants administrative requirements the applicant also must list the entities with which the applicant proposes to contract. Applicants should provide this list as a separate sheet entitled “Proposed non-competitive procurement contracts.”

For information on distinctions — for purposes of federal grants administrative requirements — between subawards and procurement contracts under awards, see “Budget Information and Associated Documentation,” below.

- Proposed project timeline and expected milestones.
- Human Subjects Protection paperwork (documentation and forms related to Institutional Review Board [IRB] review). See <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/human-subjects-and-privacy-protection>. **Note:** Final IRB approval is not required at the time an application is submitted.
- Privacy Certificate (for further guidance go to <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/confidentiality-and-privacy-protections> and <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/model-privacy-certificate>).
- List of any previous and current NIJ awards to the applicant and investigator(s), including the NIJ-assigned award numbers and a brief description of any scholarly

products that resulted in whole or in part from work funded under the NIJ award(s). (See “Goals, Objectives, Deliverables, and Expected Scholarly Products” under “Program-Specific Information,” above, for definition of “scholarly products.”)

- List of other agencies, organizations, or funding sources to which this application has been submitted (if applicable).
- Applicants proposing to use incentives or stipends payments as part of their project design must submit an incentive or stipend approval request, as a separate document, according to the requirements set forth at <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/participant-support-costs-and-incentives-social-science-research>.
- Data archiving plan. Applicants should anticipate that NIJ will require (through special award conditions, that data sets resulting in whole or in part from projects funded under this solicitation be submitted for archiving with the NACJD. See <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/data-archiving-plans-nij-funding-applicants>.

Applications should include as an appendix a brief plan — labeled “Data Archiving Plan” — to comply with data archiving requirements. The plan should provide brief details about proposed data management and archiving, including submission to NIJ (through NACJD) of **all files and documentation** necessary to allow for future efforts by others to reproduce the project’s findings and/or to extend the scientific value of the data set through secondary analysis. Pertinent files and documentation include, among other things, qualitative and quantitative data produced, instrumentation and data collection forms, codebook(s), any specialized programming code necessary to reproduce all constructed measures and the original data analysis, description of necessary de-identification procedures, and (when required) a copy of the privacy certificate and informed consent protocols.

The plan should be one or two pages in length and include the level of effort associated with meeting archiving requirements.

Note that recipients are strongly encouraged to submit required data sets at least 90 days before the end of the period of performance.

- Letters of cooperation/support or administrative agreements from organizations collaborating in the project, such as universities, publicly funded forensic laboratories, law enforcement, district attorney’s associations, medical examiner or coroner offices, and correctional agencies (if applicable).
- List of any previous and current NIJ awards to applicant organization, including the NIJ- assigned award numbers and a brief description of any products that resulted in whole or in part from work funded under the NIJ award(s).

Note on Project Evaluations

An applicant that proposes to use award funds through this solicitation to conduct project evaluations should follow the guidance under “Note on Project Evaluations” in the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#).

Please see the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for information on the following:

4. [Budget Information and Associated Documentation](#) in the “Budget Preparation and Submission Information” section.

Budget document(s) should be attached as a separate file with an appropriately descriptive file name.

The following paragraph (on “Cofunding”) expressly modifies the “Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement” provisions in the OJP Grant Application Resource Guide. The applicant is to follow the guidance in the following paragraph instead of the guidance stated under the “Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement” heading in the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#).

Cofunding: An award made by NIJ under this solicitation may account for up to 100 percent of the total cost of the project. The application should indicate whether it is feasible for the applicant to contribute cash, facilities, or services as non-federal support for the project. The application should identify generally any such contributions that the applicant expects to make and the proposed budget should indicate in detail which items, if any, will be supported with non-federal contributions.

5. [Indirect Cost Rate Agreement](#)
6. [Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire \(including applicant disclosure of high-risk status\)](#)
7. [Disclosure of Lobbying Activities](#)
8. [Applicant Disclosure of Pending Applications](#)
9. [Applicant Disclosure and Justification – DOJ High-Risk Grantees⁵](#) (if applicable)
10. [Research and Evaluation Independence and Integrity](#)
11. **Additional Attachments**

- a. **Potential Environmental Impact Coversheet and Checklist – National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

Each applicant is to submit an NIJ Programmatic Coversheet and Checklist with its application to assist NIJ in assessing the potential environmental impacts of the activities proposed for funding by the applicant. Specifically, the applicant is expected to:

- Carefully read the [Programmatic Environmental Assessment](#);
- Complete the [Cover Sheet and the attached the Programmatic Checklist](#); and

⁵ A “DOJ High-Risk Grantee” is a recipient that has received a DOJ High-Risk designation based on a documented history of unsatisfactory performance, financial instability, management system or other internal control deficiencies, or noncompliance with award terms and conditions on prior awards, or that is otherwise not responsible.

- Attach the completed documents to the grant application.

The applicant should also submit a Cover Sheet and NIJ Programmatic Checklist for any organization identified in the Budget Detail Worksheet that will receive grant funds through a sub-award or procurement contract to perform any of the following activities: new construction or renovations that change the basic prior use of a facility or significantly change the size; research and/or technology development that could be expected to have an effect on the environment; or implementation of programs involving the use of chemicals. For more information about NEPA and NIJ's NEPA Process, please go to <https://nij.ojp.gov/funding/national-environmental-policy-act-nepa>.

How to Apply (Grants.gov)

Applicants must register in and submit applications through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), a primary source to find federal funding opportunities and apply for funding. Find information on how to apply in response to this solicitation under “How to Apply (Grants.gov)” in the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#).

Registration and Submission Steps

Applicants will need the following identifying information when searching for the funding opportunity on Grants.gov.

- CFDA 16.560, National Institute of Justice Research, Evaluation, and Development Project Grants.
- Funding Opportunity Number NIJ-2020-18372.

For information on each registration and submission step, see the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#).

E. Application Review Information

Review Criteria

Applications that meet basic minimum requirements will be evaluated by peer reviewers using the following review criteria:

- 1. Statement of the Problem/Description of the Issue (Understanding of the problem and its importance) – 20%**
 - a. Demonstrated understanding of the problem.
 - b. Demonstrated awareness of relevant tools, protocols, practices, and/or policies.
 - c. Rationale for proposed project and jurisdiction(s) proposed based on trends and other background information.
 - d. Potential relevance of findings to small, rural, tribal, and/or border jurisdictions.

- e. Potential research to result in knowledge and tools that have value to other jurisdictions for a national impact.

2. Project Design and Implementation (Quality and technical merit) – 30%

- a. Awareness of training and educational needs of current and future practitioners in the field, such as forensic pathologists/medical examiners, forensic scientists, district attorneys, and law enforcement or others approved by NIJ. Soundness of methods and approach to addressing the stated objectives of the proposed project. The overall strategy should be well reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the goals of the project.
- b. Feasibility of proposed project.
- c. Awareness of pitfalls of the proposed project design and actions to minimize and/or mitigate them.
- d. Innovation and creativity (when appropriate).
- e. Cultural competence in addressing regional, racial/ethnic, language, and other diversity issues in proposed research protocol, as relevant.

3. Potential Impact – 10%

- a. Description of the expected outcome(s) of the project. Anticipated educational and/or training opportunities to be initiated and/or assisted through the program.
- b. Potential for significantly improved understanding of the stated problem. If the goals of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or forensic/MDI practice in the criminal justice system be improved?
- c. What is the likelihood that the project will exert a sustained, powerful influence on the criminal justice community as related to forensic pathologists/medical examiners, forensic scientists, district attorneys, and law enforcement?
- d. Potential for innovative solution to address (all or a significant part of) the stated criminal/justice problem. How will a successful project address the identified problem and associated critical barriers to progress?

4. Capabilities and Competencies – 30%

- a. Qualifications and experience of proposed project staff (that is, the principal investigator, any and all co-principal investigators, and all other individuals (and organizations) identified in the application (regardless of “investigator” status) who will be significantly involved in substantive aspects of the proposed project).
- b. Demonstrated ability of the applicant organization to implement the proposed strategies and manage the effort.

- c. Relationship between the capabilities/competencies of the proposed project staff (including the applicant organization) and the scope and strategies of the proposed project.
 - d. Necessary information, staff, and other resource access documented by a letter of commitment for each partnering agency.
 - e. Potential to increase the awareness of best practices for the ME/C, forensic, and criminal justice community, writ large.
- 5. Budget – 10%** — complete, cost effective, and allowable (e.g., reasonable, allocable, and necessary for project activities). Budget narratives should demonstrate generally how applicants will maximize cost effectiveness of grant expenditures. Budget narratives should demonstrate cost effectiveness in relation to potential alternatives and the goals of the project.⁶
- a. Does the Applicant propose cost-matching?
 - b. Total cost of the project relative to the perceived benefit (cost effectiveness).
 - c. Appropriateness of the budget relative to the level of effort.
 - d. Use of existing resources to conserve costs.
 - e. Proposed budget alignment with proposed project activities.
- 6. Plan for Collecting the Data Required for this Solicitation’s Performance Measures**
- 7. Plan for Dissemination to Broader Audiences**

Peer reviewers may comment — in the context of scientific and technical merit — on strength and feasibility the proposed plan (if any) to produce or to make available to broader interested audiences, such as criminal/juvenile justice practitioners or policymakers, summary information from the planned scholarly products of the project.

Review Process

NIJ reviews the application to make sure that the information presented is reasonable, understandable, measurable, achievable, and consistent with the solicitation.

Peer reviewers will review the applications submitted under this solicitation that meet basic minimum requirements. For purposes of assessing whether an application meets basic minimum requirements and should proceed to further consideration, OJP screens applications for compliance with those requirements. Although specific requirements may vary, the following are common requirements applicable to all solicitations for funding under OJP programs:

⁶ Generally speaking, a reasonable cost is a cost that, in its nature or amount, does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur the costs.

- The application must be submitted by an eligible type of applicant.
- The application must request funding within programmatic funding constraints (if applicable).
- The application must be responsive to the scope of the solicitation.
- The application must include all items necessary to meet the basic minimum requirements.
- The application, if submitted by an applicant that is a DOJ High-Risk Grantee,⁷ or is designated “high-risk” by a federal grant-making agency outside of DOJ, must not have been determined by the Director to pose a substantial risk of program implementation failure, based on 1) the applicant’s lack of sufficient progress in addressing required corrective actions necessary for removal of the DOJ High-Risk Grantee (or non-DOJ high-risk) designation, 2) the nature and severity of the issues leading to or accompanying the DOJ High-Risk Grantee (or non-DOJ high-risk) designation, and/or 3) the applicant’s expected ability to manage grant funds and achieve grant goals and objectives.

For a list of the application elements that **MUST** be included in the application submission in order for an application to meet the basic minimum requirements, see [“What an Application Should Include”](#) under [Section D. Application and Submission Information](#).

Peer review panels will evaluate, score, and rate applications that meet basic minimum requirements. NIJ may use internal peer reviewers, external peer reviewers, or a combination, to assess applications on technical merit using the solicitation’s review criteria. An internal reviewer is a current DOJ employee who is well-versed or has expertise in the subject matter of this solicitation. An external peer reviewer is an expert in the subject matter of a given solicitation who is not a current DOJ employee. Peer reviewers’ ratings and any resulting recommendations are advisory only, but are considered carefully.

Other important considerations for NIJ include geographic diversity, strategic priorities available funding, and the extent to which the Budget Detail Worksheet and Budget Narrative accurately explain project costs that are reasonable, necessary, and otherwise allowable under federal law and applicable federal cost principles.

Pursuant to the Part 200 Uniform Requirements, before award decisions are made, OJP also reviews information related to the degree of risk posed by the applicant. Among other things to help assess whether an applicant that has one or more prior federal awards has a satisfactory record with respect to performance, integrity, and business ethics, OJP checks whether the applicant is listed in SAM as excluded from receiving a federal award.

In addition, if OJP anticipates that an award will exceed \$250,000 in federal funds, OJP also must review and consider any information about the applicant that appears in the non-public segment of the integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently, the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System, FAPIIS).

⁷ See “Applicant Disclosure and Justification – DOJ High-Risk Grantees” under “What an Application Should Include,” above, for a definition of “DOJ High-Risk Grantee.”

Important note on FAPIIS: An applicant, at its option, may review and comment on any information about itself that currently appears in FAPIIS and was entered by a federal awarding agency. OJP will consider any such comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in FAPIIS, in its assessment of the risk posed by the applicant.

The Director of the National Institute of Justice will make all final award decisions and may take into account not only peer review ratings and NIJ recommendations, but also other factors as indicated in this section.

F. Federal Award Administration Information

Please see the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for information on the following:

- [Federal Award Notices](#)
- [Administrative, National Policy, and Other Legal Requirements](#)

OJP strongly encourages prospective applicants to review information on post-award legal requirements and common OJP award conditions **prior** to submitting an application.

If selected for funding, in addition to implementing the funded project consistent with the OJP-approved application, the recipient must comply with all award conditions, and all applicable requirements of federal statutes and regulations (including applicable requirements referred to in the assurances and certifications executed in connection with award acceptance).

For additional information on these legal requirements, see the “Administrative, National Policy, and Other Legal Requirements” section in the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#).

- [Information Technology \(IT\) Security Clauses](#)
- **General Information about** [Post-Federal Award Reporting Requirements](#)

In addition to the deliverables described in [Section A. Program Description](#), any recipient of an award under this solicitation will be required to submit certain reports and data.

Required reports. Recipients typically must submit quarterly financial reports, semi-annual progress reports, final financial and progress reports, and, if applicable, an annual audit report in accordance with the Part 200 Uniform Requirements or specific award conditions. Applicants should anticipate that progress reports will be required to follow the non-budgetary components of the Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR) template/format. General information on RPPRs may be found at www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/rppr/. Future awards and fund drawdowns may be withheld if reports are delinquent. (In appropriate cases, OJP may require additional reports.)

See the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information on specific post-award reporting requirements, including performance measures data.

G. Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s)

For OJP contact(s), see page 2.

For contact information for Grants.gov, see page 2.

H. Other Information

Please see the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for information on the following:

- [Freedom of Information and Privacy Act \(5 U.S.C. 552 and 5 U.S.C. 552a\)](#)
- [Provide Feedback to OJP](#)

Application Checklist

NIJ National Center on Forensics, FY 2020

This application checklist has been created as an aid in developing an application.

What an Applicant Should Do:

Prior to Registering in Grants.gov:

- ☐ Acquire a DUNS Number (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- ☐ Acquire or renew registration with SAM (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))

To Register with Grants.gov:

- ☐ Acquire AOR and Grants.gov username/password (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- ☐ Acquire AOR confirmation from the E-Biz POC (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))

To Find Funding Opportunity:

- ☐ Search for the Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov (see page 20)
- ☐ Access Funding Opportunity and Application Package (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- ☐ Sign up for Grants.gov email [notifications](#) (optional) (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- ☐ Read [Important Notice: Applying for Grants in Grants.gov](#)
- ☐ Read OJP policy and guidance on conference approval, planning, and reporting available at [ojp.gov/financialguide/DOJ/PostawardRequirements/chapter3.10a.htm](#) (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))

After Application Submission, Receive Grants.gov Email Notifications That:

- ☐ (1) application has been received,
- ☐ (2) application has either been successfully validated or rejected with errors (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))

If No Grants.gov Receipt, and Validation or Error Notifications are Received:

- ☐ Contact NIJ regarding technical difficulties (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))

Overview of Post-Award Legal Requirements:

- ☐ Review the “[Overview of Legal Requirements Generally Applicable to OJP Grants and Cooperative Agreements - FY 2020 Awards](#)” in the [OJP Funding Resource Center](#).

Scope Requirement:

- ☐ The federal amount requested is within the allowable limit(s) of \$2,000,000.

What an Application Should Include:

The following items are critical application elements required to pass basic minimum requirements review. An application that OJP determines does not include the application elements that must be included in the application submission in order for the application to meet the basic minimum requirements, will neither proceed to peer review, nor receive further consideration.

- ☐ Program Narrative (see page 13)
- ☐ Budget Detail Worksheet (including Budget Narrative)
(see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- ☐ Resumes/curriculum vitae of key personnel (see page 17)
- ☐ Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- ☐ Project Abstract (see page 13)
- ☐ Appendices (if applicable) (see page 16)
 - _____ Bibliography/references
 - _____ Any tools/instruments, questionnaires, tables/charts/graphs, or maps pertaining to the proposed study that supplement those in the narrative
 - _____ Proposed project timeline and expected milestones
 - _____ Human Subjects Protection paperwork (documentation and forms related to Institutional Review Board [IRB] review)
 - _____ Privacy Certificate
 - _____ Multiple PI leadership plan
 - _____ Consortium/contractual arrangements
 - _____ Letters of support
 - _____ Data archiving plan
 - _____ List of proposed project staff, affiliation, and roles
 - _____ List of any previous and current NIJ awards to applicant organization and investigator(s) (if applicable)
 - _____ List of other agencies, organizations, or funding sources to which this proposal has been submitted (if applicable)
 - _____ Incentive or stipend approval request (if applicable)
- ☐ Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable) (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- ☐ Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire
(see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- ☐ [Disclosure of Lobbying Activities \(SF-LLL\)](#) (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- ☐ Applicant Disclosure of Pending Applications (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- ☐ Applicant Disclosure and Justification – DOJ High-Risk Grantees (if applicable)
(see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- ☐ Research and Evaluation Independence and Integrity
(see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))

Additional Attachments

- ☐ Request and Justification for Employee Compensation; Waiver (if applicable)
(see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- ☐ Potential Environmental Impact Coversheet and Checklist (NEPA) (see page 19)

NIJ's National Center on Forensics Program – FY2020

Luther Schaeffer

Physical Scientist/Program Manager
Office of Investigative and Forensic Sciences
National Institute of Justice



NIJ

April 21, 2020

NIJ's National Center on Forensics Program – FY2020

Posted: April 6, 2020

Closes: **June 5, 2020, 11:59 PM, EST**



NIJ

DOJ Forensic Science Priorities

1. **Facilitating coordination and collaboration on forensic science within the Department, across the federal government, and with state, local, and tribal entities.**
2. Increasing the capacity of forensic service providers so that evidence can be processed quickly and investigations can be concluded without delay.
3. Improving the reliability of forensic analysis to enable examiners to report results with increased specificity and certainty.



<https://www.justice.gov/olp/forensic-science>



NIJ

National Institute of Justice

- Led by David Muhlhausen, Ph.D.
- **NIJ — the research, development and evaluation agency of the U.S. Department of Justice** — is dedicated to improving knowledge and understanding of crime and justice issues through science. NIJ provides objective and independent knowledge and tools to inform the decision-making of the criminal justice community to reduce crime and advance justice, particularly at the state and local levels.

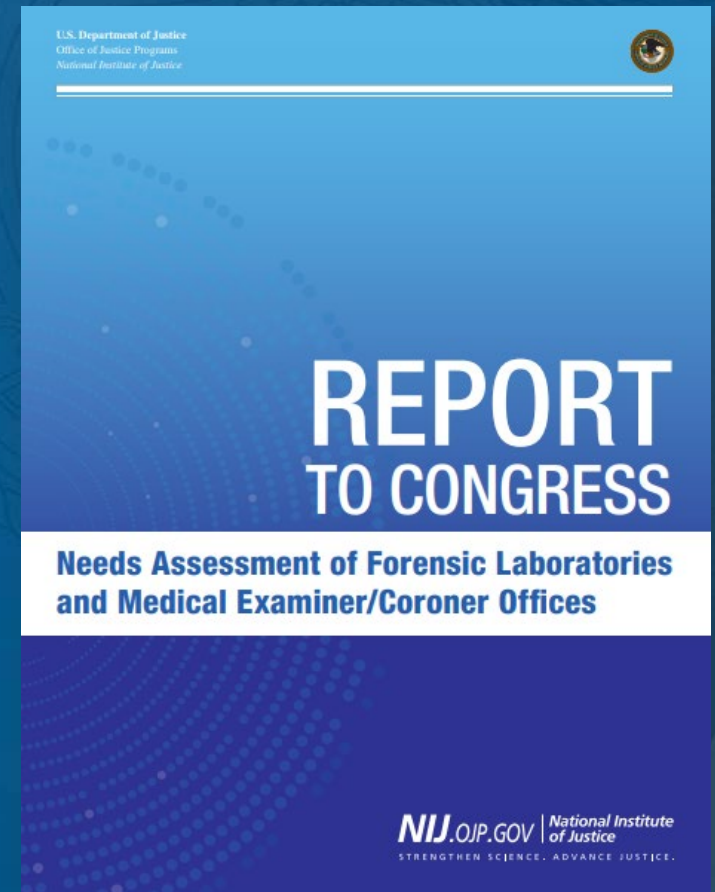
Strengthen science. Advance justice.



Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices – 12/2019

- Mandated by Justice for All Reauthorization Act of 2016 (JFARA) to examine the workload, backlog, personnel, and equipment needs for both public crime laboratories and medical examiner and coroner (ME/C) offices.
- One year of listening sessions with stakeholders and SME.
- Resulted in a comprehensive report that identified promising practices and innovative solutions.

<https://www.justice.gov/olp/page/file/1228306/download>



DOJ Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices – December 2019

- Resources and partnerships to strengthen the consistent provision of medicolegal death investigation (MDI) services and the application of MDI standards and best practices for over 2,000 medical examiner and coroner (ME/C) offices across the United States.
- Resources and strategies to address the national shortage of trained, board-certified forensic pathologists that threatens the quality and consistency of MDI services underscored by deaths attributed to the opioid crisis.
- Increased training, certification, and staffing resources to strengthen the MDI workforce and personnel who provide ancillary services that support the MDI and forensic pathology workload (e.g., autopsy technicians, pathology assistants, forensic radiologists, and forensic photographers).

Background

- New solicitation for FY2020
- Appropriation calls for NIJ's National Center on Forensics —The Committee provides \$2,000,000 for the NIJ to facilitate a partnership amongst a full service State department of forensic science with a medical examiner function; an accredited university of higher education with affiliate medical and law schools; and a statewide district attorneys association for **the purpose of providing medico-legal learning opportunities for medical students to train as deputy medical examiners/coroners in underserved rural areas; provide forensic science and legal training to district attorneys, judges, and law enforcement; and develop opportunities as appropriate amongst the designated partners to benefit current and future practitioners in the field.**

Program Purpose:

With this solicitation, NIJ seeks proposals from qualified applicants to establish and operate the NIJ National Center on Forensics to:

Facilitate a partnership amongst:

- a. A full-service State department of forensic science with a medical examiner function;
- b. An accredited university of higher education with affiliate medical and law schools;
- c. **AND** a statewide district attorneys association.

For the purpose of:

- a. Providing medico-legal learning opportunities for medical students to train as deputy medical examiners/coroners in underserved rural areas;
- b. Providing forensic science and legal training to district attorneys, judges, and law enforcement; and
- c. Developing opportunities, as appropriate, amongst the designated partners to benefit current and future practitioners in the field.



NIJ

Eligibility

In general, NIJ is authorized to make grants to, or enter into contracts or **cooperative agreements** with eligible entities as listed below:

- States (including territories);
- Units of local government;
- Federally recognized Indian tribal governments (as determined by the Secretary of the Interior) that perform law enforcement functions;
- Nonprofit and for-profit organizations (including tribal nonprofit and for-profit organizations); and
- Institutions of higher education (including tribal institutions of higher education)

What an Application Should Include

- SF-424
- Project abstract (not to exceed 400 words)
- Program narrative
- Budget detail worksheet and narrative
- Additional Items
 - Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
 - Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire (including applicant disclosure of high-risk status)
 - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
 - Applicant disclosure of pending applications
 - Applicant disclosure of high-risk status
 - Research and Evaluation Independence and Integrity
 - Potential Environmental Impact Coversheet and Checklist - National Environmental Policy Act



Application Requirements: BMR

- Basic Minimum Requirements
 - For this solicitation, NIJ has designated the following application elements as **critical**:
 - Program Narrative
 - Budget Detail Worksheet/Budget Narrative
 - Résumés/Curriculum Vitae of Key Personnel
- If any ONE or more of these are missing, your application will not be reviewed or approved. NO exceptions or excuses!

APPLYING FOR AWARDS



NIJ

How to Find a Funding Opportunity

1. Go to: www.nij.gov



2. Mouse over “**FUNDING & AWARDS**” & Click on “**CURRENT FUNDING**”

Funding Opportunities

NIJ annually releases competitive solicitations calling for research, development, testing, and evaluation proposals; and formula and competitive solicitations for capacity enhancement programs.

Find:

- [Forthcoming funding opportunities](#) — typically in the late fall, we begin posting a list of forthcoming solicitations to allow potential applicants to learn our areas of interest in the coming solicitation season.
- [Current funding opportunities](#) — list of solicitations under which we are accepting applications; typically, most solicitations are released December through May (subject to appropriations availability).
- [Expired funding opportunities](#) — a complete list of solicitations from past years,

NIJ Solicitation Notifications

NIJ.gov

1. Go to Subscribe Page
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Funding & Awards



NIJ

ALL Applications **MUST** include

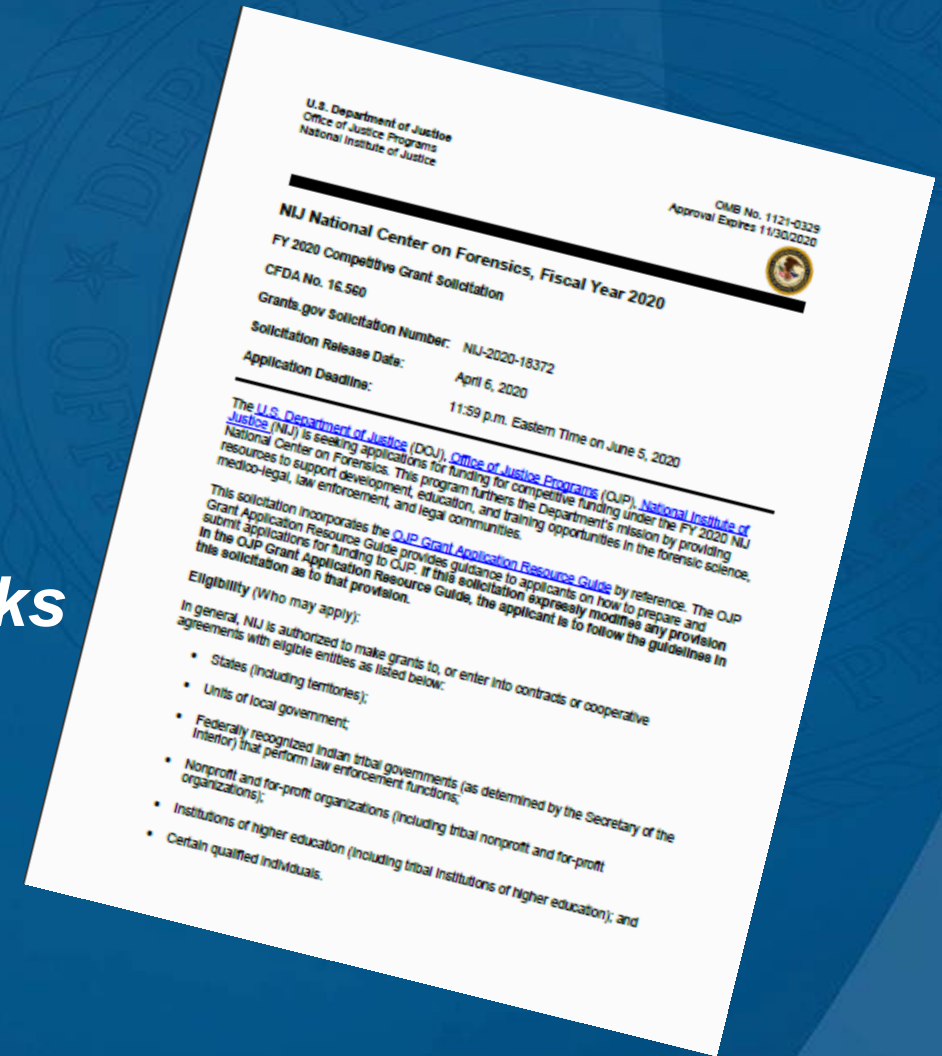
- Project narrative
- Budget narrative/Budget detail worksheet
- Resumes /CVs of key personnel



Applications missing any one of these items will NOT be considered for funding.

Applying

- READ carefully
- Don't procrastinate
 - Technical difficulties not considered
 - Validation or rejection notifications
- Applicant registration **can take *several weeks***
- ***Apply to correct solicitation!***



NIJ

Applications will NOT be accepted late

- SAM or Grants.gov registration in time
 - SAM registration: 10 business days +
 - Grants.gov: 48 hours
- Grants.gov instructions
- Solicitation instructions
- *Technical issues*
 - Applicant's computer
 - IT environment
 - Firewalls
 - Browser incompatibility.



Award Process

- Applications reviewed internally for solicitation compliance
- Peer reviewed and scored based on review criteria in solicitations
 - Statement of the Problem/Description of the Issue – 20%
 - Project Design and Implementation – 30%
 - Potential Impact – 10%
 - Capabilities and Competencies – 30%
 - Budget – 10%
 - Plan for Collecting the Data Required for this Solicitation's Performance Measures
 - Plan for Dissemination to Broader Audiences



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- Facebook – <https://www.facebook.com/OJPNIJ>
- Twitter – <https://twitter.com/OJPNIJ>

Application Assistance and Support

National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) Response Center

<https://www.ncjrs.gov>

- Provides solicitation support, general assistance, and links to all current OJP funding opportunities.
- Subscribe to receive email notifications of new opportunities:
 - **JUSTINFO** newsletter as well as the weekly **Funding News From NCJRS** email.
 - Select “Grants/funding” as an area of interest in your **NCJRS registration** profile when you subscribe.
- **Hours:** 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. eastern time, Monday through Friday
- **Toll free** - 800–851–3420
- **Email** - grants@ncjrs.gov
- **Web chat** - <https://webcontact.ncjrs.gov/ncjchat/chat.jsp>
- **TTY** - 301–240–6310 (hearing impaired only)

Application Assistance

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- Provides technical assistance with submitting an application:
 - **Customer Support Hotline** – 800-518-4726 or 606-545-5035
 - The Grants.gov Support Hotline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, except on federal holidays.
 - **Email**
 - support@grants.gov
 - **Website**
 - <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support.html>
- Provides information on available federal funding opportunities for various federal agencies.

Q&A

Please submit questions using the Q&A box
and selecting all panelists.



NIJ

Contact Information

National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS)

1-800-851-3420 (TTY: 301-240-6310 for hearing impaired only)

Email: Grants@ncjrs.gov

Fax: 301-240-5830

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NIJ

Funding Webinar Transcript

On April 21, 2020, NIJ hosted a webinar that provided an overview of this solicitation.

Following are the transcript and slide presentation from that webinar.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to today's webinar "NIJ's National Center on Forensics Program – FY2020," hosted by the National Institute of Justice. At this time, I am going to pass off to the presenter.

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: I'd like to say hello to everybody on the phone. Thank you very much for joining us. My name is Luther Schaeffer. I'm a Staff Scientist and a Program Manager here at the National Institute of Justice, in the Office of Investigative and Forensic Sciences. Today, I will be introducing NIJ's National Center on Forensics solicitation. So over the course of the presentation, I'm going to provide a brief introduction of the NIJ, followed by program details such as eligibility, purpose, required documents, review process, and a couple of reminders when putting together your application. Questions, as Mary Jo has stated, will be taken immediately concluding the presentation. The slides and transcripts for today's presentation will be made available for those of you who must sign off before the conclusion of the webinar, or for those that were unable to listen in to the live webcast. The slides and transcripts will be appended to the solicitation document found on NIJ.gov, just as Mary Jo stated.

The solicitation is currently open. It was posted on April 6th and will remain open for 60 days, which takes us to June 5th, when it will close at 11:59 p.m., Eastern Standard Time. So be sure to mark your calendar. Get your applications in and early. For those of you who are not familiar with National Institute of Justice, we are an agency within the United States Department of Justice, and we operate under the Department's authority. . Our priorities are to foster collaboration and coordination in forensic science among federal, state, local, and tribal entities and organizations, to increase the capacity of forensic science labs in the United States and, lastly, to improve the reliability of forensic analyses.

That brings us to the NIJ. We are currently led by Dr. David Muhlhausen. We are the research and development and evaluation agency of the Department of Justice. We are a research-funding organization. NIJ follows the "Listen, Learn, Inform" model. We listen to the needs of the field. We learn ways to meet those needs by funding research, development and evaluation projects. And then we inform the field of what was learned. For example, late last year, NIJ released a report to Congress entitled "[The Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices](#)." If you have not read it, it is available for download on our website listed below, or look for our booth at various conferences to receive a free hard copy. Over the course of a year, scores of listening sessions with stakeholders and subject matter experts from across the forensics community were held. The result is a comprehensive document that identifies promising practices and innovative solutions for challenges experienced in the nation's forensic labs and medical examiner/coroner offices.

The text seen here is found in Chapter 7, and it's appropriate for this particular program. It captures the needs of medical examiners and coroners as expressed through these listening

sessions. The needs identified are for resources to address the board-certified forensic pathologist shortage, use of standardized and best practices in MDI services — Medicolegal Death Investigation—as well as for increased training, certification, and staffing resources for MDI. All of which are appropriate to highlight before going into the particulars of this new solicitation for 2020. NIJ’s National Center on Forensics — I’m just going to call it the “Center” from now on. It’s new for 2020 and was born out of appropriation guidance passed through Congress.

NIJ was provided \$2 million to establish this Center. It will facilitate a partnership between a state Department of Forensic Science with a medical examiner function, an accredited university with both medical and law school affiliations and—I wanted to highlight this here—there is an “and,” so all three things must be there for eligibility— and a statewide district attorneys’ association.

And that takes us to the Program Purpose. The purpose of this solicitation is as follows. It is to provide medicolegal learning opportunities for medical students to train as deputy medical examiners and coroners in underserved rural areas. The Center will serve as a centralized, innovative center to encourage engagement of medical students to train as deputy medical examiners or coroners in underserved rural areas. The “Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices” was a report to Congress that highlighted the extreme national shortage of practicing, board-certified forensic pathologists who are trained and qualified to perform forensic autopsies. Given the importance of this field and the difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified individuals, the Center is expected to develop methods by which to provide effective learning opportunities with a focus on increasing the number of medical students pursuing a career in forensic pathology. The Center is expected to analyze these learning methods to identify best practices. Scientific and technical trainings will be developed to include topics relevant to underserved rural areas, including tribal lands, covering topics which may include preparing and applying, achieving, and maintaining, appropriate accreditation or specialty certifications for individuals, opioid or NPS response and/or mass fatality disaster management.

The second purpose is to provide forensic science and legal training to district attorneys, judges, and law enforcement. The NIJ Center on Forensics is expected to provide specialized training relevant to the intersection of forensic science and law. These efforts may include providing workshops on emerging techniques used in forensic science, webinars, or peer-reviewed articles addressing forensic science in relevant or relevant, legal doings and foundational information regarding legal considerations for the use of forensic science in the courtroom. The Center will provide national expertise for the criminal justice community’s ongoing efforts, and continuously improve the understanding and application of forensic science for law enforcement and the legal community.

Under NIJ guidance, the Center may interface with the DOJ National Advocacy Center to coordinate forensic science information for the legal community. Lastly, the Center may develop opportunities, as appropriate, among designated partners to benefit current and future practitioners in the field. NIJ’s National Center on Forensics should include methods by which to

understand the needs of forensic pathologists, medical examiners, forensic scientists, district attorneys, and law enforcement practitioners, and from this, develop comprehensive opportunities that will benefit both current and future practitioners. Resources and opportunities will be referenced and developed in consideration of the variety of challenges facing forensic science in various communities— from small, rural, and tribal, to city, county, and state agencies.

Training topics will include advances in research, relevant implementation efforts of that research, applicable court rulings, and standardization or best practices. Topics will be developed in coordination with partners within the NIJ National Center on Forensics, and initiated with NIJ approval. And that takes us into eligibility. Eligible entities are states, units of local government, federally recognized Indian tribal governments, nonprofits, for-profit organizations, and institutions of higher learning, including tribal institutions of higher learning. This award will be made in the form of cooperative agreements. For those of you who are familiar with grants, grants typically give the grantee a great deal of autonomy. Grantees are still required to submit regular progress reports, among other grant administrative requirements. The level of involvement of NIJ is fairly low.

For cooperative agreements, substantial involvement of NIJ is expected. The grantee is required to work with the assigned grant manager, who is NIJ's authorized rep responsible for ensuring the successful management of the award. Additionally, an NIJ scientist, such as myself, will be assigned to work collaboratively with the awardees' investigators on substantive issues related to the award--providing assistance, guidance, coordination, and participation in project activities to ensure its success, where applicable. The NIJ scientist may also co-publish or co-present with the recipients' investigators as a representative of NIJ. Substantial involvement means that after award, scientific or program staff will assist, guide, coordinate, or participate in project activities. Generally stated, under cooperative agreement awards, responsibility for the day-to-day conduct of the funded project rests with the recipient in implementing the funded and approved proposal and budget, as well as the terms and conditions of the award. Responsibility for the oversight or redirection of the project, if necessary, rests with NIJ. So that being said, substantial involvement is a relative term, rather than an absolute concept. How involved we will be in a cooperative agreement ultimately depends on the circumstances of the award. The National Center on Forensics should expect that the majority of its work will be on projects specifically defined and/or approved by NIJ, in support of the previously identified objectives, as well as those identified in the NIJ "Needs Assessment of Forensic Laboratories and Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices" report to Congress. Applicants should expect that the level of effort may vary significantly during the project period for any number of reasons, including changes in availability of funds or supplemental funds, legal changes, availability of new forensic technologies, or even a desire to capitalize on technology opportunities.

The successful applicant must be able to demonstrate the ability to add or reduce capacity in relevant areas, without adversely affecting the ability to provide services or incurring unacceptable additional costs. In this connection, NIJ is very interested in entertaining applications that propose to leverage existing programs, facilities, and personnel. Applications

proposing programs involving partnerships with other agencies or organizations, such as publicly funded forensic laboratories or institutions of higher learning, must include a strong letter of cooperation or support, or an administrative agreement signed by appropriate decision-making authorities from each proposed partner agency. If selected for an award, grantees will be expected to have a formal agreement in place with their partnering agencies by January 1, 2021.

And now we'll move into what an application should include. With all applications, the SF-424, the Application for Federal Assistance, is required; a Project Abstract, not to exceed 400 words; a Program Narrative, which should not exceed 14 double-spaced pages, standard font, 12.1" margins, but a minimum of seven pages should be dedicated to the description of the project and its design and implementation. Many more details are provided in the solicitation document of what should be included in the Program Narrative. As part of this proposal, the NIJ National Center on Forensics should designate a director, who has the knowledge, skills, abilities, and vision to lead their team, and should have an internal management structure and demonstrated partnerships with any proposed sub-recipients capable of supporting the education, training, and service missions of the Center. It should also include your Budget Detail Worksheet, which includes a narrative portion, as well as the additional items included below. More details are provided in the solicitation document. I won't go into each and every one of those, but just be aware. There are quite a few documents that must be included for a complete application package.

And right here, I want to highlight BMR—Basic Minimum Requirements. Many of our solicitations at NIJ incorporate BMR. For this solicitation, NIJ has designated the following elements as critical. You must include the Program Narrative; Budget Detail Worksheets, which includes a Budget Narrative as well, which is just a description of the purchases; as well as Resumes and CVs of Key Personnel. If any one or more of these are missing from your application, you will not be moved along to Peer Review. There are no exceptions or excuses made in BMR. BMR is made immediately following the closure of the solicitation.

Here, I'm going to cover some pointers for applying. This is mostly for those not yet familiar with our process, or for those needing a quick refresher. Here you see the new-and-improved NIJ.gov. To locate our Funding Opportunities—it's a little bit different than it was previously—you place your pointer over the "Funding & Awards" on NIJ's landing page, which will reveal dropdowns. Select "Current funding opportunities" from that dropdown list, and you can find the solicitation that you're interested in. The National Center on Forensics in this case is at the very bottom, as it's, I believe, the latest solicitation that we released from NIJ. For next year and other solicitations, register for e-mail updates through NIJ's website. The link is found in the top-right corner over the "Search" box. You click "Subscribe" and you enter your e-mail address and preferences. Once this solicitation is made available for applications, the users will receive an e-mail notification.

NIJ also announces the solicitation on its social media platforms as well. Awards are also listed on the NIJ website; however, there are no previous awards, since this is the first year we're offering this one. And I want to hammer this home. This is what will eliminate a good deal of

applications if you are not attentive. Make sure that the application attachments are uploaded. Simple errors such as uploading the wrong file can exclude an application from funding consideration. NIJ reviews the application to make sure that the information presented is reasonable, understandable, measurable, achievable, and consistent with the solicitation. When applying, please read the solicitation document carefully. Don't procrastinate. Technical difficulties are not considered when appeals are made if an application package is not complete. Validation or rejection notifications you should be very aware of: Keep an eye out for them. Check your junk mailbox. Application registration can take several weeks. And apply to the correct solicitation. Applicants need to be registered in SAM, which may take up to 10 business days. And the information needs to be migrated to Grants.gov, and that can take an additional two days.

Consider the registration processes, registration instructions, solicitation instructions, and possible IT issues. Applications are not accepted late for any of these reasons. If technical issues do occur with OJP's IT system, notify OJP as instructed in the solicitation and obtain documentation of the issues. An application may be accepted late if there is proof of an OJP-side system issue.

This is the Award Process that we're going to be going through for this particular solicitation. Applications will be first reviewed by NIJ to confirm that all the key components are included, and that the application responds to the scope of the solicitation, and that the applicant is eligible to apply for funding. Each complete application is then reviewed by a panel of peer reviewers who comment and score each application according to the review criteria described in the solicitation. You can see the criteria:

- Statement of the Problem/Description of the Issue is 20% of the total score;
- Project Design and Implementation, Quality, and Technical Merit is 30%;
- Potential Impact is 10%;
- Capabilities and Competencies is 30%, and
- Budget is 10%.

Also included in discussions are the Plan for Collecting the Data Required for this Solicitation's Performance Measures, as well as the Plan for Dissemination to Broader Audiences. Mary Jo, I'll hand it back over to you.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Hi, everybody. You can subscribe to receive e-mail notices from NIJ, as was described, or you can also text your information. And to do that, you would go to <https://nij.ojp.gov/subscribe>, insert your e-mail address, and send that to 468-311, and you can subscribe that way. Just please note that message and data rates may apply. As mentioned previously, too, you may follow NIJ on both Facebook and Twitter.

Application Assistance after today's webinar is available through the National Criminal Justice Reference Service. So if you have a question that we are unable to answer, or if we run out of time and cannot get to your question, you can submit it to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at grants@ncjrs.gov. They are open 10-6pm, Eastern Time, and Monday through Friday until 8pm the date the solicitation closes. You may also contact them at 800-851-

3420. And they do have a webchat feature. In addition, they do have two e-mail newsletters that you can subscribe to: JUSTINFO, which comes out twice a month, and the Funding News From NCJRS that comes out weekly, on a Friday. The Funding newsletter will announce funding opportunities from all agencies within the Office of Justice Programs, as well as notify you when there are webinars such as this one, or when items from webinars have been posted to the appropriate agency website.

Please also note that I did mention that the NCJRS is open until 8pm on the date that the solicitation closes, but it is strongly recommended that you submit your application at least 72 hours in advance. If you need assistance submitting your application, uploading documents, or anything of that nature, you do need to contact Grants.gov. They are available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, and they are closed on federal holidays. You may phone them at 800-518-4726 or e-mail them at support@grants.gov. And with that, we will go into our questions.

“With the extreme variation in the system of both the ME and the DA across the United States, what is the vision of NIJ in how the NCF would disseminate the lessons learned to the broader community?”

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: Thanks, Mary Jo. I believe this is going to be left up to the design of the applicant. NIJ is looking for innovative solutions exactly for this cause.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: “Are computer scientists eligible to apply to this program?”

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: As long as it fits within the solicitation for responsiveness, it certainly would not preclude you from being partnered, as long as you meet all the other eligibility requirements. Having that incorporated into the program certainly wouldn’t be completely prohibited.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: “Does the grantee have to be an associated with an accredited forensic pathology fellowship program?”

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: I believe accreditation will be a benefit to the applicant; however, I have to look back through the solicitation whether or not that’s absolutely required at this time. I know that we’re looking for accredited institutions of higher learning. I know that it would be taken into consideration, and would benefit the applicant to be accredited; however, I will need to look into whether or not you have to be accredited in order to apply.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: “Will NIJ consider applications that include public defenders or the defense community?”

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: As long as the eligibility requirements are met, as required by the solicitation, I do not believe that that would be prohibited.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: “For the resume and CVs, is there a page limit or guidance on format?”

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: What I can say to you is please review the solicitation document. Most of the details that you’re going to be looking for, all the specifics, will be provided in the

solicitation. There is a page limit for the Narrative portion; however, many of the different parts and components of that Narrative are not counted against your Program Narrative. If you have CVs, I believe they can be as long as necessary, as we would like to see whoever your key personnel would be.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: And Luther, I believe that these could be as attachments and not counted against the page count.

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: I believe that's correct.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: "Could the funding be used to develop an accredited forensic pathology fellowship program?"

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: I think as long as it's made in the Narrative of how that would benefit the community and the goals of that, and if it falls into the responsiveness and scope of the solicitation, it would certainly be deemed as helpful, as this is looking to increase the number of board-certified forensic pathologists entering into the discipline. So fellowships could certainly be considered in that case, as long as it's presented in the program or application set forth.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: "Can two jurisdictions from two different states collaborate on the solicitation, or does it have to be one state and partners within that state only?"

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: That's a great question. I would need to consult with our general counsel to determine what the requirements are for that. I don't think I have enough to give you an answer specifically. If you could, I would prefer you submit that question through NCJRS at grants@ncjrs.gov, so we can answer that and put it on the FAQ. Great question.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: The slide and the transcript will be available in about five business days after today's webinar. It will be added to the back of the existing solicitation, so it won't be listed some place else. Just go to the solicitation, and you'll be able to find it. And NIJ will also send you an e-mail letting you know exactly when that information has been posted.

"To clarify, only state medical examiner systems, coroners who are affiliated with a university that has law and medicine programs, and state-level district attorneys associated are eligible. In other words, county- and regional-level medical officers would not be considered?"

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: This is considering local, county, state, tribal. It's not that you would be excluded. It's that we're looking for partnerships to try and combine as many resources as possible to create this inclusive center to help both forensic pathologists, practitioners, and district attorneys as best as we can, to train both current and future folks entering the field. So, no, it's not eliminating or prohibiting local or county facilities or agencies.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: "Can you explain who reviews the proposals?"

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: We consider external peer reviewers. It's an expert or subject matter expert for a given solicitation. So we would evaluate the peer reviewers that we have in our database, as well as potentially solicit individuals that have not applied, that don't have conflicts, in order to review these applications that are best suited.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: “Can your budget request include money for time spent doing research, or is the budget request for material only?”

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: Research is not included as an acceptable activity for this program. Evaluation of research or analysis of research can be conducted; however, this [funding] is not for a research program.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: “Can you describe what is meant by affiliated medical school?”

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: We’re looking for universities that have the resources available to them, such as a law school within a university, or a partnership with a law school. And what was the other part of that question?

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: “What is meant by an affiliated medical school?”

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: It’s a partnership as long as there’s an MOU or a partnership [agreement] that’s signed. I believe that would be acceptable; however, if you would submit that for further clarification so I can consult with other agencies or other offices within our agency, I’d appreciate that. Please submit that to your NCJRS.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: “Do we need a letter of support from local or national federal law enforcement agencies?”

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: I believe that any partnership that you would like to put forth in the application should have a signed letter of partnership or a memorandum of understanding between the two showing that it is a valid partnership going forward with the application.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: “Are forensic science Ph.D. students performing their research at a local medical examiner’s office eligible to apply?”

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: As I stated before, this isn’t a research solicitation. There are research-funding solicitations that are currently open at NIJ. I would recommend looking into those. And there’s also, through BJA, other programs, such as the Strengthening the Medical Examiner and Coroner System Program, which used to be in NIJ, and had moved to BJA. I believe it’s actually open now, too, but this [funding] is not to support research.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: “Any Indian forensic lab scientist is eligible for the fellowship or—
“and it cuts off.

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: That would be a question best left answered through NCJRS, but I will say that this is a National Center on Forensics, so the applicant must be United States-based. However, a fellow coming in as international, I don’t have an answer. However, that would also be up to the jurisdiction. , But if you want to submit that through NCJRS, I can find a better answer for you.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: “Is the funding solely for forensic-based programs?”

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: That is correct. It has to be forensically relevant, and if you read through the solicitation, I think that you'll get a better gist of exactly what we're looking for.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: "Are research funds to validate forensic tools and methods allowable under this solicitation?"

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: Once again, please review the solicitation document. This is not to conduct any type of research. There are programs that NIJ offers, including the public labs program and the R&D program, which would likely be better suited for such a project.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: "Can public defense or other defense entities be included in the forensics training that will be developed by the court and prosecutors and police?"

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: I'm going to need to verify the answer to that question. Submit that through NCJRS. But I do believe that that is not prohibited. I believe they can be included.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: "Can this be used to expand medical examiner services, [such as to] move a local office to regional?"

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: I believe that this would have to be determined by the applicant proposal. If they can demonstrate how this would enhance the amount of forensic pathologists entering the field, as long as it answers the goals of the solicitation; however, that sounds very specific to their particular program. If you would like a more direct answer, or something more in depth, please once again submit that through NCJRS.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: "Following up on a previous question about medical school affiliations and your reply about MOUs or signed partnerships: To whom should additional questions be submitted?"

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: That would go to NCJRS, the National Criminal Justice Reference Service. That slide is showing here. You can e-mail them at grants@ncjrs.gov. You may also phone them at 800-851-3420, and their website address is www.ncjrs.gov. And as previously answered, applications are only accepted from United States entities. Foreign entities are not eligible to apply.

"Is there a requirement that the medical examiner's office be located within the state crime lab, or is it acceptable for them both to be different branches of the state government?"

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: If you could please submit that to me, for a little bit of research, I would like to make sure I have a complete answer for you on that one. I believe that they're not both required, but let me do some research into that question for you.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: "What's the possibility of NIJ offering related funding in subsequent funding cycles? Because continuing a national-level forensic institute sounds like an expensive endeavor." So they're interested in knowing if it will be continued.

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: That we cannot say. That would depend on future funding levels in this program as well as funding availability, so I can't really speculate on that. However, in the appropriation guidance as well as the solicitation, we do ask for flexibility in terms of whether or not there is additional funding that becomes available.

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: So among the eligible parties to apply, local as well as state are eligible. Under the facilitating the partnerships, we are looking for a partnership at the state level as well as in the forensic science system. That is correct.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: Again, the information for the National Criminal Justice Reference Service is located on the slide here. They are available at grants@ncjrs.gov. You can e-mail them. They will work with Luther to get an answer to you. And then if you need assistance with Grants.gov and technical assistance submitting your application or uploading files, you can go to Grants.gov, at support@grants.gov or call them at 800-518-4726. Grants.gov is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They are closed on federal holidays, and it is highly recommended that you submit your application at least 72 hours in advance in case there are any technical problems. Issues such as delays with your computer or system issues that you may have are not going to qualify as a reason for late submission.

LUTHER SCHAEFFER: And so thank you very much, Mary Jo. I'm seeing a lot of confusion, and I believe I may have misspoken or misrepresented. I just want to clarify that for this partnership, we are looking for a full-service state department of forensic science with an ME function, and an accredited university, and a statewide district attorneys association. It's not saying that those also couldn't incorporate additional parties. I think I see where I didn't explain that well; however, we are looking for that particular partnership. That is correct.

And I'd like to say thank you very much, everybody, for tuning in for this. I really appreciate it.

MARY JO GIOVACCHINI: All right. And that is our last question, so we thank you very much for attending. Have a great day.