

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



---

**Solicitation Title:** BJA FY24 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program – Competitive

**Assistance Listing Number:** 16.742

**Grants.gov Opportunity Number:** O-BJA-2024-172111

**Solicitation Release Date:** April 30, 2024

**Step 1: Application Grants.gov Deadline:** 8:59 p.m. Eastern Time on June 24, 2024

**Step 2: Application JustGrants Deadline:** 8:59 p.m. Eastern Time on July 1, 2024

---

## Contents

Synopsis.....	4
Program Description Overview.....	4
Eligibility.....	4
Agency Contact Information.....	4
Application Submission Information.....	5
Registration.....	5
Submission.....	5
Program Description.....	6
Program Description Overview.....	6
Statutory Authority.....	6
Specific Information.....	6
Solicitation Goals and Objectives.....	7
Goals.....	7
Objectives.....	7
Deliverables.....	8
Federal Award Information.....	8
Awards, Amounts, and Durations.....	8
Continuation Funding Intent.....	9
Availability of Funds.....	9
Competitive Funds for States and Units of Local Government.....	9
Type of Award.....	9
Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement.....	9

Eligibility Information .....	9
How To Apply .....	11
Application Resources .....	11
How To Apply .....	11
Registration .....	11
Submission.....	11
Submission Dates and Time .....	12
Experiencing Unforeseen Technical Issues Preventing Submission of an Application (Technical Waivers).....	12
Application and Submission Information .....	13
Content of Application Submission and Available Surveys .....	13
Content of the SF-424 in Grants.gov .....	19
Content of the JustGrants Application Submission .....	19
Coverdell Statutory Certifications .....	28
External Investigations Attachment .....	29
Forensic Laboratory Accreditation Documentation (if applicable .....	29
Application Review Information .....	31
Review Criteria .....	31
Review Process.....	32
Federal Award Administration Information.....	32
Federal Award Notices .....	32
Evidence-Based Programs or Practices .....	32
Information Regarding Potential Evaluation of Programs and Activities .....	32
Administrative, National Policy, and Other Legal Requirements .....	32
Civil Rights Compliance.....	33
Financial Management and System of Internal Controls.....	33
Information Technology Security Clauses.....	33
General Information About Post-Federal Award Reporting Requirements .....	34
Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s).....	34
Other Information .....	34
Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. §§ 552 and 552a).....	34
Provide Feedback to OJP.....	34
Performance Measures.....	34
Application Checklist.....	35
Pre-Application.....	35

Application Step 1 .....35  
Application Step 2 .....36  
Review, Certify, and Submit Application in JustGrants .....37  
Standard Solicitation Resources .....38  
Frequently Asked Questions for the FY 2024 Paul Coverdell Competitive Solicitation .....39

# Synopsis

## Program Description Overview

The [U.S. Department of Justice](#) (DOJ), [Office of Justice Programs](#) (OJP), [Bureau of Justice Assistance](#) (BJA) is seeking applications for funding.

OJP is committed to advancing work that promotes civil rights and equity, increases access to justice, supports crime victims and individuals impacted by the justice system, strengthens community safety, protects the public from crime and evolving threats, and builds trust between law enforcement and the community.

With this solicitation, BJA seeks to fund applications to the FY 2024 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program – Competitive (Coverdell Competitive Program) to improve forensic science and medical examiner/coroner services, including services provided by laboratories operated by states and units of local government.

This program furthers the DOJ's mission to uphold the rule of law, to keep our country safe, and to protect civil rights.

## Eligibility

- State governments
- City or township governments
- County governments

An applicant may submit more than one application, if each application proposes a different project in response to the solicitation. Also, an entity may be proposed as a subrecipient (subgrantee) in more than one application.

## Agency Contact Information

For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation, contact the OJP Response Center by phone at 800-851-3420 or 301-240-6310 (TTY for hearing-impaired callers only) or email [grants@ncjrs.gov](mailto:grants@ncjrs.gov). The OJP Response Center operates from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Eastern Time (ET) Monday–Friday and from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET on the solicitation closing date.

For procedures related to unforeseen technical issues beyond the control of the applicant that impact submission by the deadlines, see the “How To Apply” section, [Experiencing Unforeseen Technical Issues](#).

For assistance with submitting the [Application for Federal Assistance standard form \(SF-424\)](#) and a [Disclosure of Lobbying Activities \(SF-LLL\)](#) in Grants.gov, contact the Grants.gov Customer Support Hotline at 800-518-4726, 606-545-5035, [Grants.gov Customer Support](#), or [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). The Grants.gov Support Hotline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, except on federal holidays.

For technical assistance with submitting the **full application** in JustGrants, contact the JustGrants Service Desk at 833-872-5175 or [JustGrants.Support@usdoj.gov](mailto:JustGrants.Support@usdoj.gov). The JustGrants Service Desk operates from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET Monday–Friday and from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. ET on Saturday, Sunday, and federal holidays.

## **Application Submission Information**

### **Registration**

Before submitting an application, an applicant must have a registration in the [System for Award Management \(SAM.gov\)](#).

### **Submission**

Applications must be submitted to DOJ electronically through a two-step process that begins in Grants.gov and is completed in JustGrants. See the solicitation [Submission Dates and Time](#) section for the Grants.gov and JustGrants application deadlines.

**Step 1:** The applicant must register for this opportunity in Grants.gov at <https://grants.gov/register> and submit by the Grants.gov deadline the required [Application for Federal Assistance standard form \(SF-424\)](#) and a [Disclosure of Lobbying Activities \(SF-LLL\)](#). See solicitation [Submission Dates and Time](#) section for application deadlines.

**Step 2:** The applicant must submit the **full application**, including attachments, in JustGrants at [JustGrants.usdoj.gov](https://justgrants.usdoj.gov) by the JustGrants application deadline. See solicitation [Submission Dates and Time](#) section for application deadlines.

# Program Description

## Program Description Overview

With this solicitation, BJA seeks to fund applications to the FY 2024 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program—Competitive (Coverdell Competitive Program) to improve forensic science and medical examiner/coroner services, including services provided by laboratories operated by states and units of local government.

## Statutory Authority

The Coverdell Program is authorized by Public Law 90-351, Title I, Sec. 2801-2806 (codified at 34 U.S.C. 10561-10566). Any awards under this solicitation would be made under statutory authority provided by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024.

## Specific Information

This program furthers the Department's mission by providing states and units of local government with tools needed to meet the challenges of responding to crime. Specifically, this program seeks to improve forensic science and medical examiner/coroner services, including services provided by laboratories operated by states and units of local government. Funding is to be used for forensic science laboratories and/or medical examiner/coroner offices. (See the Definitions section for additional information).

Under the Coverdell Program, state administering agencies (SAAs) may apply for both formula and competitive funds. Units of local government may apply only for competitive funds. **This solicitation is ONLY for competitive funds.** An applicant seeking to apply for Coverdell formula funds (consistent with 34 U.S.C. § 10563(a)(1)) available for grants to eligible states would need to apply separately under BJA's [FY 2024 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program—Formula solicitation](#).

Funding awarded under the Coverdell Program may not be used for research. However, applicants may address emerging forensic science issues and technology through implementation of new technologies and processes into public laboratories. Applicants are encouraged to review resources, such as the National Institute of Justice's [Forensic Technology Center of Excellence](#) (FTCoE) or BJA's [Forensics Training and Technical Assistance](#) (FTTA) when working to evaluate and implement new technologies and processes in the laboratory to help ensure that strong evidence-based methods and best practices are used. FTTA provides resources for forensic science laboratories with a landing page specific for the [Coverdell program](#). FTCoE provides reports, webinars, and other free products to assist practitioners with technology transition (including [implementation strategies](#), [technology landscape studies](#), and [success stories](#)).

Agencies are also encouraged to participate in the [National Forensic Laboratory Information System \(NFLIS\)](#). NFLIS is a program of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Diversion Control Division that systematically collects drug identification results and associated information from drug cases submitted to and analyzed by participating federal, state, and local forensic laboratories with drug chemistry sections. The program consists of three components (Drug, Toxicology, and Medical Examiner/Coroner) that complement each other to provide a holistic picture of the drugs analyzed by the U.S. forensic community. Data is submitted on a voluntary basis and agencies are encouraged to seek participation from any labs used for outsourcing in an effort to strengthen the understanding of drug mortality, novel psychoactive

substances, drug frequency trends, levels of drugs involved in cause of death, and laboratory or office methods and practices.

## Definitions

For the purposes of this solicitation, the following are defined:

**Backlog:** A backlog in the analysis of forensic science evidence exists if such evidence:

- Has been stored in a laboratory, medical examiner's office, coroner's office, law enforcement storage facility, or medical facility.
- Has not been subjected to all appropriate forensic testing because of a lack of resources or personnel.

**Forensic Science Laboratory:** Any state/local government entity performing forensic science services is considered a "forensic science laboratory." Medical examiner and coroner offices are considered to be forensic science laboratories for the purposes of this solicitation.

**Research:** A systematic investigation—including research development, testing, and evaluation—designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. Validation of established technologies for implementation in a laboratory setting is not considered research for the purposes of this solicitation.

**Accreditation:** A formal process by which an impartial entity reviews the policies and procedures of an organization to ensure its operations are consistent with national or international standards. Accreditation assesses a forensic laboratory's capacity to generate and interpret results in a particular forensic discipline and helps to ensure an ongoing compliance to industry and applicable international standards.

## Solicitation Goals and Objectives

### Goals

The goal of Coverdell grants to applicant states is to demonstrate improvement over current operations in forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services provided in the state, including services provided by laboratories operated by the state and services provided by laboratories operated by units of local government within the state. Reduction in forensic analysis backlogs is considered an improvement in timeliness of services.

The goal of Coverdell grants made directly to units of local government is to demonstrate improvement over current operations in forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services provided by the local jurisdiction.

### Objectives

A state or unit of local government that receives a Coverdell grant must use the grant for one or more of the following six objectives:

1. To carry out all or a substantial part of a program intended to improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services in the state, including those services provided by laboratories operated by the state and those operated by units of local government within the state.
2. To eliminate a backlog in the analysis of forensic science evidence, including, among other things, a backlog with respect to firearms examination, latent prints, impression

evidence, toxicology, digital evidence, fire evidence, controlled substances, forensic pathology, questioned documents, and trace evidence.

3. To train, assist, and employ forensic laboratory personnel and medicolegal death investigators, as needed, to eliminate such a backlog.
4. To address emerging forensic science issues (such as statistics, contextual bias, and uncertainty of measurement) and emerging forensic science technology (such as high throughput automation, statistical software, and new types of instrumentation).
5. To educate and train forensic pathologists.
6. To fund medicolegal death investigation systems to facilitate accreditation of medical examiner and coroner offices and certification of medicolegal death investigators.

**Important Note:** Congress has appropriated funding to help the forensic science community address the specific challenges crime laboratories are confronting related to the proliferation of opioids and synthetic drugs. To address these issues, BJA plans to allocate approximately 56 percent of available funds to specifically target the challenges that opioids and synthetic drugs have brought to the forensic science community.

### **Priority Areas**

OJP will provide priority consideration when making award decisions to applications requesting Coverdell funds for projects that address specified opioid and synthetic drug related challenges to the forensic science community.

Note: Addressing this priority area is one of many factors that OJP considers in making funding decisions. Receiving priority consideration does not guarantee an award.

### **Deliverables**

The Coverdell Law requires the Attorney General of the United States to submit to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President pro tempore of the Senate a report that includes (1) the aggregate the amount of grants awarded under the Coverdell Program in that fiscal year, and (2) summary information provided by grant applicants/recipients in that fiscal year. This report is do not later than 90 days after the last day of each fiscal year for which one or more grants are awarded under the Coverdell Program.

For information about what the applicant needs to submit regarding Goals, Objectives, and Deliverables, please see the [How to Apply section on the Application Goals, Objectives, Deliverables, and Timeline Web-Based Form.](#)

### **Federal Award Information**

#### **Awards, Amounts, and Durations**

Anticipated Number of Awards: 15

Anticipated Maximum Dollar Amount per Award: up to \$500,000

Period of Performance Start Date: October 1, 2024

Period of Performance Duration (Months): 36

Anticipated Total Amount to Be Awarded Under This Solicitation: \$4,547,937

Additional Information: While the maximum allowable funding amount is \$500,000, OJP encourages applicants, including those that are new or that have never before received a federal award, to submit a proposed budget that best supports their project objectives and organizational capabilities, even if the proposed budget is at a lower amount than the maximum allowable funding level.



### **Continuation Funding Intent**

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

### **Availability of Funds**

This funding opportunity, and awards under this funding opportunity, are subject to the availability of funding and to any changes or additional requirements that may be imposed by the agency or by law. In addition, nothing in this solicitation is intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

The figures and calculations reflected in this solicitation are based on an estimated total amount available of \$30,319,578 (combined Formula and Competitive funds available), although the amount ultimately made available could be higher or lower. Applicants are strongly advised to check for updates to the solicitation prior to submitting applications.

### **Competitive Funds for States and Units of Local Government**

Fifteen percent (\$4,547,937) of the available funds will be allocated among states and units of local government through a competitive process. The average annual number of Part 1 violent crimes reported by each state to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for calendar years 2020, 2021, and 2022; existing resources; and current needs of the potential grant recipient will be considerations in award decisions. For FY 2024, the maximum amount a state or unit of local government may receive in competitive funds is \$500,000. Units of local government that provide forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services (whether through a forensic science laboratory, medical examiner office, or coroner's office) may apply directly to BJA for competitive funds. A state may apply through its SAA for competitive funds for forensic sciences improvements above and beyond those it can accomplish with its estimated amount of formula funds.

### **Type of Award**

OJP expects to make awards under this funding opportunity as grants. See the "[Administrative, National Policy, and Other Legal Requirements](#)" section of the [Application Resource Guide](#) for a brief discussion of important statutes, regulations, and award conditions that apply to many (or in some cases, all) OJP grants.

### **Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement**

This funding opportunity does not require a match.

### **Eligibility Information**

States and units of local government may apply for FY 2024 Coverdell Competitive Program funds for use for forensic science laboratories (see Definitions section for additional information on how "forensic science laboratory" is defined for the purposes of this solicitation).

States may be eligible for both formula and competitive funds. Units of local government within states may be eligible for competitive funds and may apply directly to BJA. This solicitation is ONLY for the competitive funds. Any state application for funding MUST be submitted by the Coverdell SAA (see a list of SAAs on the OJP website at

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/saa/index.htm>). (Other interested state agencies or departments must coordinate with their respective SAAs.)

For the purposes of this notice of funding opportunity, “state” means any state of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

# How To Apply

## Application Resources

When preparing and submitting an application, the following resources may aid prospective applicants:

1. Grants.gov [“How to Apply for Grants”](#)
2. OJP [“How To Apply”](#) section in the [Application Resource Guide](#)
3. JustGrants [Application Submission Training](#)

This solicitation (notice of funding opportunity) incorporates guidance provided in the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) (Application Resource Guide), which provides additional information for applicants to prepare and submit applications to OJP for funding. **If this solicitation requires something different from any guidance provided in the [Application Resource Guide](#), the difference will be noted in this solicitation and the applicant is to follow the guidelines in this solicitation, rather than the guidance in the [Application Resource Guide](#) that is in conflict.**

## How To Apply

### Registration

Before submitting an application, all applicants must register with the System for Award Management (SAM.gov). An applicant must renew their registration every 12 months. If an applicant does not renew their SAM.gov registration, it will expire. An expired registration can delay or prevent application submission in Grants.gov and JustGrants. Applicants are encouraged to start the SAM.gov registration process at least 30 days prior to the application deadlines. Applicants who fail to begin the registration or renewal process at least 10 business days prior to the Grants.gov deadline may not complete the process in time and will not be considered for late submission.

### Submission

Applications must be submitted to DOJ electronically through a two-step process that begins in Grants.gov and is completed in JustGrants.

**Step 1:** After registering with SAM.gov, the applicant must submit the **SF-424** and **SF-LLL** in Grants.gov at <https://grants.gov/register> by the Grants.gov deadline. **To leave time to address any technical issues that may arise, an applicant should submit the SF-424 and SF-LLL as early as possible and recommended not later than 48 hours before the Grants.gov deadline.** If an applicant fails to submit in Grants.gov by the deadline, they will be unable to apply in JustGrants. Applicants can confirm Grants.gov submission by verifying their application status shows as “submitted” or “agency tracking number assigned.”

**Step 2:** The applicant must then submit the **full application**, including attachments, in JustGrants at [JustGrants.usdoj.gov](https://justgrants.usdoj.gov) by the JustGrants deadline.

OJP recommends that applicants submit the complete application package in JustGrants at least 48 hours prior to the JustGrants deadline. Some of the required sections of the application will be entered directly into JustGrants, and other sections will require documents to be uploaded and attached. Therefore, applicants should allow enough time before the JustGrants deadline to prepare all the requirements of the application. Applicants may save their progress

in the system and add to or change the application as needed prior to hitting the “Submit” button at the end of the application in JustGrants.

An applicant will receive emails when successfully submitting in Grants.gov and JustGrants and should maintain all emails and other confirmations received from SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and JustGrants systems.

For additional information, see the “How To Apply” section in the [Application Resource Guide](#) and the [DOJ Application Submission Checklist](#).

### **Submission Dates and Time**

The **SF-424 and the SF-LLL** must be submitted in Grants.gov by 8:59 p.m. ET on June 24, 2024.

The **full application** must be submitted in JustGrants by 8:59 p.m. ET on July 1, 2024.

To be considered timely, the **full application** must be submitted in JustGrants by the JustGrants application deadline. Failure to begin the SAM.gov, Grants.gov, or JustGrants registration and application process in sufficient time (i.e., waiting until the due dates identified in this solicitation for those systems to begin the application steps) is not an acceptable reason to request a technical waiver.

### **Experiencing Unforeseen Technical Issues Preventing Submission of an Application (Technical Waivers)**

OJP will only consider requests to submit an application after the deadline when the applicant can document that a technical issue with a government system prevented submission of the application on time.

If an applicant misses a deadline due to unforeseen technical issues with SAM.gov, Grants.gov, or JustGrants, the applicant may request a waiver to submit an application after the deadline. However, the waiver request will not be considered unless it includes documentation of attempts to receive technical assistance to resolve the issue prior to the application deadline. A tracking number is the most typical documentation and is generated when the applicant contacts the applicable service desks to report technical difficulties. Tracking numbers are generated automatically when an applicant emails the applicable service desks, and for this reason, long call wait times for support do not relieve the applicant of the responsibility of getting a tracking number.

An applicant experiencing technical difficulties must contact the associated service desk indicated below to report the technical issue and receive a tracking number:

- SAM.gov: contact the [SAM.gov Help Desk \(Federal Service Desk\)](#), Monday–Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET at 866-606-8220.
- Grants.gov: contact the [Grants.gov Customer Support Hotline](#), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, except on federal holidays, at 800-518-4726, 606-545-5035, or [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).
- JustGrants: contact the JustGrants Service Desk at [JustGrants.Support@usdoj.gov](mailto:JustGrants.Support@usdoj.gov) or 833-872-5175, Monday–Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET and Saturday, Sunday, and federal holidays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. ET.

If an applicant has technical issues with SAM.gov or Grants.gov, the applicant must contact the OJP Response Center at [grants@ncjrs.gov](mailto:grants@ncjrs.gov) within **24 hours of the Grants.gov deadline** to request approval to submit after the deadline.

If an applicant has technical issues with JustGrants that prevent application submission by the deadline, the applicant must contact the OJP Response Center at [grants@ncjrs.gov](mailto:grants@ncjrs.gov) within **24 hours of the JustGrants deadline** to request approval to submit after the deadline.

Waiver requests sent to the OJP Response Center must —

- describe the technical difficulties experienced (provide screenshots if applicable);
- include a timeline of the applicant’s submission efforts (e.g., date and time the error occurred, date and time of actions taken to resolve the issue and resubmit; and date and time support representatives responded);
- include an attachment of the complete grant application and all the required documentation and materials;
- include the applicant’s Unique Entity Identifier (UEI); and
- include any SAM.gov, Grants.gov, and JustGrants Service Desk tracking numbers documenting the technical issue.

OJP will review each waiver request and the required supporting documentation and notify the applicant whether the request for late submission has been approved or denied. An applicant that does not provide documentation of a technical issue (including all information listed above), or that does not submit a waiver request within the required time period, will be denied.

For more details on the waiver process, OJP encourages applicants to review the “Experiencing Unforeseen Technical Issues” section in the [Application Resource Guide](#).

## **Application and Submission Information**

### **Content of Application Submission and Available Surveys**

The following application elements **must** be included in the application to meet the basic minimum requirements to advance to peer review and receive consideration for funding:

- SF-424 and SF-LLL (in Grants.gov)
- Proposal Abstract (in JustGrants)
- Proposal Narrative (in JustGrants)
- Budget Web-Based Form, which includes the budget details and the budget narrative (in JustGrants)
- [Five certifications](#) required by the Coverdell law:
  1. Certification as to [Plan for Forensic Science Laboratories](#) or [Application from a Unit of Local Government](#)
    - The applicant is to submit only one version of the “Certification as to Plan for Forensic Science Laboratories.” DO NOT submit both versions of this certification. Applicant *states* are to submit the “Application from a State” version only; applicant *units of local government* are to submit the “Application from a Unit of Local Government” version only.
  2. Certification as to [Generally Accepted Laboratory Practices and Procedures](#)
  3. Certification as to [Forensic Science Laboratory System Accreditation](#)
    - Applicants requesting funds for only medical examiner’s offices or coroner’s offices are not required to submit this certification.

4. Certification as to [Use of Funds for New Facilities](#)
  - Applicants must submit this certification even if no new facilities are being constructed.
5. Certification as to [External Investigations](#) and [Attachment](#)

The Coverdell law (34 U.S.C. § 10562) requires that, to request a grant, an applicant for Coverdell funds **must submit**:

- **A certification and description regarding a plan for forensic science laboratories** ([state form](#) OR [unit of local government form](#)). Each applicant must submit a certification that the state or unit of local government has developed a plan for forensic science laboratories under a program intended to improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science or medical examiner services in the state, including such services provided by the laboratories operated by the state and those operated by units of local government within the state. Applicants must also specifically describe the manner in which the grant will be used to carry out that plan.
- **A certification regarding use of [generally accepted laboratory practices](#)**. Each applicant must submit a certification that any forensic laboratory system, medical examiner's office, or coroner's office in the state, including any laboratory operated by a unit of local government within the state, that will receive any portion of the grant amount (whether directly or through a subgrant) uses generally accepted laboratory practices and procedures established by accrediting organizations or appropriate certifying bodies.
- **A certification regarding [forensic science laboratory accreditation](#)**. Each applicant must submit a certification that any forensic science laboratory system in the state, including any laboratory operated by a unit of local government within the state, that will receive any portion of the grant amount (whether directly or through a subgrant) either is accredited or is not so accredited, but will (or will be required in a legally binding and enforceable writing to) use a portion of the grant amount to prepare and apply for such accreditation not more than 2 years after the date on which a grant is awarded under the FY 2023 Coverdell Program.

**NOTE: Applicants requesting funds for only medical examiner or coroner's offices are not required to submit this certification. See 34 U.S.C. § 10562(2).**

- **A certification and description regarding [costs of new facilities](#)**. Each applicant must submit a certification that the amount of the grant used for the costs of any new facility constructed as part of a program to improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science or medical examiner services will not exceed certain limitations set forth in the Coverdell law at 34 U.S.C. § 10564(c). (See information on "permissible expenses" in Federal Award Information.) Applicants must also specifically describe any new facility to be constructed, as well as the estimated costs of the facility.

**NOTE: Applicants must submit this certification even if no new facilities are being constructed.**

- **A certification regarding [external investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct](#) and [the External Investigations Attachment Template](#)**. Each applicant must submit a certification that "a government entity exists and an appropriate process is in place to conduct independent external investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct substantially affecting the integrity of the forensic

results committed by employees or contractors of any forensic laboratory system, medical examiner office, coroner's office, law enforcement storage facility, or medical facility in the state that will receive a portion of the grant amount." In connection with the certification regarding external investigations (described above), applicants must provide, prior to receiving award funds, the name(s) of the existing government entity (or government entities). This information is to be provided as an attachment to the proposal narrative section of the application using [the External Investigations Attachment Template](#).

Applicants are expected to carefully review the requirements of each certification before determining whether the certification may be properly made. Any certification that is submitted must be executed by an official who is both familiar with the requirements of the certification and authorized to make the certification on behalf of the applicant agency (that is, the agency applying directly to BJA). **Certifications must be submitted using the templates provided at [Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program | Certifications | Bureau of Justice Assistance \(ojp.gov\)](#).**

Certifications made on behalf of subrecipients of award funds—rather than certifications made on behalf of the agency applying directly to BJA—are not acceptable to satisfy the certification requirements and should not be submitted.

In connection with the certification regarding forensic science laboratory accreditation (described above), applicants must demonstrate, prior to receiving award funds, that any forensic science laboratory system, including any laboratory operated by a unit of local government within the state, that will receive any portion of the grant amount either is accredited or will (or will be required to) prepare and apply for accreditation consistent with the Coverdell law. See the "What an Application Should Include" section, which describes the documentation and information an applicant is to provide regarding its accreditation or its plans to prepare and apply for accreditation.

The accrediting body must be a signatory to an internationally recognized arrangement and must offer accreditation to forensic science conformity assessment bodies using an accreditation standard that is recognized by that internationally recognized arrangement. The scope of the accreditation must include all discipline(s) for which funds are requested. If the current scope of accreditation does not include the discipline(s) for which funds are requested, the applicant must include funds in its budget and plans in its proposal narrative to prepare and apply for accreditation in those disciplines.

Please note that funds will not be made available to applicant agencies that fail to provide the necessary information.

### **Important Note on Referrals in Connection with Allegations of Serious Negligence or Misconduct**

The highest standards of integrity in the practice of forensic science are critical to the enhancement of the administration of justice. BJA assumes that recipients (and subrecipients) of Coverdell funds will make use of the process referenced in their certification as to external investigations and will refer allegations of serious negligence or misconduct substantially affecting the integrity of forensic results to government entities with an appropriate process in place to conduct independent external investigations, such as the government entities identified in the grant application.

For **each fiscal year** of an award made under this solicitation, recipients will be required to report to BJA on an annual basis:

- The number and nature of any such allegations.
- Information on the referrals of such allegations (e.g., the government entity or entities to which referred, the date of referral).
- The outcome of such referrals (if known as of the date of the report).
- If any such allegations were not referred, the reason(s) for the nonreferral.

Payments to recipients (including payments under future awards) may be withheld if the required information is not submitted on a timely basis.

### **Special Guidance on Certification Regarding External Investigations into Allegations of Serious Negligence or Misconduct**

The certification regarding external investigations has a number of requirements, each of which must be satisfied before the certification may be made. The official authorized to make the certification on behalf of the applicant agency must carefully review each of the statutory elements and this guidance before determining whether a certification properly may be made.

After reviewing the information and guidance provided here, the official, on behalf of the applicant agency, must determine whether:

- A government entity exists
- with an appropriate process in place
- to conduct independent, external investigations
- into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct
- substantially affecting the integrity of the forensic results
- committed by employees or contractors
- of any forensic laboratory system, medical examiner's office, coroner's office, law enforcement storage facility, or medical facility in the state that will receive a portion of the grant amount.

**Note:** In making this certification, the certifying official is certifying that these requirements are satisfied not only with respect to the applicant itself, but also with respect to each entity that will receive a portion of the grant amount. Certifying officials are advised that:

1. A false statement in the certification or in the grant application that it supports may be the subject of criminal prosecution, including under 18 U.S.C. § 1001 and/or 1621 and 34 U.S.C. §§ 10271-10273.
2. OJP grants, including certifications provided in connection with such grants, are subject to review by OJP and/or DOJ's Office of the Inspector General.

The following guidance, provided by way of examples for applicants' review, is designed to illustrate elements of the external investigation certification that the official authorized to make the certification on behalf of the applicant agency must take into account in determining whether the certification may be properly made.

Because it is not possible for BJA to provide examples relating to every type of government entity with an appropriate process in place to conduct independent, external investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct substantially affecting the integrity of the forensic results committed by employees or contractors, this guidance should not be viewed as



all inclusive. In addition, this guidance is not intended to constitute legal advice from BJA on the question of whether the required certification may be properly made on behalf of the applicant. Such a determination must be made by an appropriate official based on the statutory requirements of the certification after review of this guidance.

**Illustrative Examples:**

**One:** The only government entity that will receive Coverdell award funds is a forensic laboratory that is a unit of a local law enforcement agency (e.g., a police department). The law enforcement agency has an Internal Affairs Division (IAD) that reports directly to the head of the law enforcement agency (the police chief) and the head of the unit of local government (the mayor/city commissioner). The IAD has the authority to conduct investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct by laboratory employees and contractors.

Guidance: Execution of the certification might be appropriate under these facts. Nevertheless, the official authorized to make the certification on behalf of the applicant agency must be satisfied that the IAD at issue has the requisite authority to conduct independent investigations (for example, whether the IAD is completely free from influence or supervision by laboratory management officials) into allegations relating to employees or contractors of the laboratory.

**Two:** A state intends to distribute Coverdell award funds to state and local forensic laboratories and medical examiners/coroners' offices. There is an Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in the state with authority to conduct investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct by employees and contractors of forensic laboratories and medical examiner/coroner's offices, both at the state and local levels.

Guidance: Execution of the certification might be appropriate under these facts. Nevertheless, the certifying official must be satisfied that the state OIG's authority in this regard is not circumscribed in such a way that the OIG's ability to conduct independent investigations is limited (for example, through a reporting hierarchy that does not provide for the OIG to report directly to the chief executive officer or another equally independent state official or office).

**Three:** A city has applied for a Coverdell award and all funds will go to the city's forensic laboratory. There is a process in place whereby the city's district attorney (DA) may appoint an independent investigator to conduct an investigation into allegations concerning the city's forensic laboratory. If the DA appoints an independent investigator, the investigator will have authority to investigate allegations of serious negligence or misconduct by both laboratory employees and contractors.

Guidance: Execution of the certification might be appropriate under these facts. In this regard, however, the certifying official must be satisfied that the process at issue (appointment of an independent investigator by the city DA) includes procedures under which allegations involving the laboratory are submitted to or are made known to the DA, and that the DA's authority and responsibility to appoint an independent investigator to conduct investigations of such allegations is sufficiently delineated in city policies and/or regulations so that the appropriate process in place is clearly defined.

**Four:** An applicant agency determines that the forensics laboratory director (or some other individual in the chain of command at the laboratory) has sole responsibility to conduct

investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct committed by laboratory employees.

Guidance: Under these circumstances, execution of the certification would not be appropriate because there is no process in place to conduct independent external investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct committed by laboratory employees and contractors.

**Five:** A state applicant intends to distribute Coverdell award funds to forensic laboratories at both the state and local levels. An independent commission established by the Governor has authority to investigate allegations of serious negligence or misconduct by employees, including employees of units of local government within the state.

Guidance: Under these circumstances, the existence of this commission is not itself a sufficient basis for execution of the certification. In this regard, the commission does not have authority to investigate allegations of serious negligence or misconduct by contractors of state and local government forensic laboratories that receive Coverdell funds. (If, however, some other government entity, distinct from the commission, has a process in place to conduct independent external investigations of allegations of serious negligence or misconduct by such contractors, execution of the certification might be appropriate depending on all the facts.)

**Six:** A local forensic laboratory, which is intended to receive a portion of the funds from a Coverdell award to a state, notifies the state applicant that a quality assurance official is responsible for investigating allegations of serious negligence or misconduct by employees and contractors of the local forensic laboratory. The quality assurance official reports to the director of the forensic laboratory.

Guidance: Under these circumstances, execution of the certification would not be appropriate because the quality assurance official reports to the director of the forensic laboratory; therefore, there is no process in place to conduct independent external investigations of allegations against the forensics laboratory as required to make the certification.

**Seven:** An applicant agency (a forensics laboratory) intends to employ a contractor or a nongovernmental organization to conduct investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct committed by laboratory employees.

Guidance: Under these circumstances, execution of the certification would not be appropriate as there is neither a government entity nor an appropriate process in place to conduct independent external investigations of allegations against the laboratory, whether alleged to be committed by laboratory employees and/or contractors, because the contractor or nongovernmental entity is employed by and responsible to the forensics laboratory.

**Eight:** An applicant agency is accredited by an independent accrediting or certifying organization such as ANAB, NAME, A2LA, IAC&ME, etc.

Guidance: In this situation, execution of the certification would not be appropriate. The fact of accreditation or certification by an outside entity on its own does not demonstrate that the agency has a process in place to investigate allegations of serious negligence or

misconduct committed by employees or contractors. There is insufficient information to properly make the required certification in this situation.

If OJP determines that an application does not include these elements, it will not proceed to peer review and will not receive any further consideration.

### **Content of the SF-424 in Grants.gov**

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

In Section 8F of the SF-424, please include the name and contact information of the individual **who will complete the application in JustGrants**. JustGrants will use this information (*email address*) to assign the application to this user in JustGrants.

**Intergovernmental Review:** This funding opportunity **is** subject to [Executive Order \(E.O.\) 12372](#). An applicant may find the names and addresses of State Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) at the following website: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/SPOC-list-as-of-2023.pdf>. If the applicant's State appears on the SPOC list, the applicant must contact its SPOC to find out about, and comply with, the State's process under E.O. 12372. On the SF-424, an applicant whose State appears on the SPOC list is to make the appropriate selection in response to question 19, once the applicant has complied with its State E.O. 12372 process. An applicant whose State does not appear on the SPOC list should answer question 19 by selecting "Program is subject to E.O. 12372 but has not been selected by the State for review."

### **Content of the JustGrants Application Submission**

#### ***Entity and User Verification (First Time Applicant)***

For first time JustGrants applicants, once the application is received from Grants.gov, DOJ will send an email (from [DIAMD-NoReply@usdoj.gov](mailto:DIAMD-NoReply@usdoj.gov)) to the individual listed in Section 8F of the SF-424 with instructions on how to create a JustGrants account. This email should arrive within 24 hours after this individual receives confirmation from Grants.gov of their SF-424 and SF-LLL submissions. Register the Entity Administrator (the person who manages who can access JustGrants on behalf of the applicant), the Application Submitter, and Authorized Representative for the applicant with JustGrants as early as possible and (recommended) not later than 48-72 hours before the JustGrants deadline. Once registered in JustGrants, the Application Submitter will receive a link in an email to complete the rest of the application in JustGrants. Find additional information on JustGrants Application Submission in the [Application Resource Guide](#).

#### ***Standard Applicant Information***

The "Standard Applicant Information" section of the JustGrants application is pre-populated with the SF-424 data submitted in Grants.gov. The applicant will need to review the Standard Applicant Information in JustGrants and make edits as needed. Within this section, the applicant will need to add ZIP codes for areas affected by the project; confirm their Authorized Representative; and verify and confirm the organization's unique entity identifier, legal name, and address.

#### ***Proposal Abstract***

A Proposal Abstract (no more than 400 words) summarizing the proposed project—including its purpose, primary activities, expected outcomes, the service area, intended beneficiaries, and subrecipients (if known)—must be completed in the JustGrants web-based form. This abstract should be in paragraph form without bullets or tables, written in the third person, and exclude personally identifiable information. Abstracts will be made publicly available on the OJP and USASpending.gov websites if the project is awarded. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for an [example](#) of a proposal abstract.

### ***Data Requested With Application***

The following application elements should be submitted in the web-based forms in JustGrants.

#### ***Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire (including Applicant Disclosure of High Risk Status)***

The Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire helps OJP assess the financial management and internal control systems, and the associated potential risks of an applicant as part of the pre-award risk assessment process. Every OJP applicant (other than an individual applying in their personal capacity, not representing an applicant organization) is required to complete the web-based Questionnaire form in JustGrants. See the [Application Resource Guide: Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire \(including Applicant Disclosure of High Risk Status\)](#) for additional guidance on how to complete the questionnaire.

#### ***Brief Applicant Entity Questionnaire***

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) is collecting the following information to help assess its efforts to attract a broader range of applicants. These questions apply to the applicant entity and its work and scope only, and not to the specific project(s) being proposed within the application. Responses to the questions will not be considered in the application review process. The questions included in the questionnaire are available in the [Standard Forms & Instructions: Brief Applicant Entity Questionnaire](#).

#### ***Proposal Narrative***

The Proposal Narrative should be submitted as an attachment in JustGrants. The attached document should be double-spaced, using a standard 12-point size font; have no less than 1-inch margins; and should not exceed 20 numbered pages. If the Proposal Narrative fails to comply with these length restrictions, OJP may consider such noncompliance in peer review and in final award decisions.

The proposal narrative must specifically describe the manner in which Coverdell grant funds will be used to carry out the applicant's plan to improve forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services over current operations. (Reduction of forensic analysis backlogs is considered an improvement in timeliness of services.)

If grant funds are requested to cover the costs of a new facility, the proposal narrative must specifically describe the new facility to be constructed and the estimated costs of that facility.

State applicants. A state that seeks competitive funds should describe how competitive funds will be used to support improvements in forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services above and beyond the improvements it will accomplish with its estimated amount of formula funds. States are expected to consider the needs of laboratories operated by units of local government as well as those operated by the state. Existing resources and current needs will be

considered in awarding competitive funds and should be addressed in any request for competitive funds.

As part of the discussion of existing resources and current needs, applicants should include information in the proposal narrative that describes any known specific impact(s) on resources and needs indicated by the applicant state's Part 1 violent crime data.

Any state application for funding MUST be submitted by the Coverdell SAA (see list of SAAs on the OJP website at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/saa/index.htm>). When applying for competitive funds, an SAA should consult with all interested state agencies to prepare a request for competitive funds. No more than one request for competitive funds per state (SAA) will be funded. If more than one request for competitive funds is made by the state, each should be submitted as a separate application in Grants.gov.

Unit of local government applicants. A unit of local government should consult all interested components before preparing an application for competitive funds. No more than one application for competitive funds per unit of local government will be funded. If more than one request for competitive funds is made by the unit of local government, each should be submitted as a separate application in Grants.gov. As part of the discussion of existing resources and current needs, applicants requesting competitive funds should include information in the proposal narrative that describes any known specific impact(s) on resources and needs indicated by Part 1 violent crime data (state data and any data reported by the applicant).

### **Accreditation**

If grant funds are requested for accreditation, the proposal narrative must describe the accreditation activities and plans; and as applicable, the projected schedule for preparation and application for accreditation. Under the Coverdell Program, any forensic science laboratory system, including any laboratory operated by a unit of local government within the state, that is not accredited (as set out in the Coverdell law) and that will receive a portion of the grant amount must use a portion of the grant amount to prepare and apply for accreditation not more than 2 years after the date of the Coverdell grant award. For purposes of this solicitation, see definition of "forensic science laboratory" under Definitions in the Program Description section. The Proposal Narrative must include the following sections:

- a. Description of the Issue
  - Describe the challenges faced in providing forensic and/or medical examiner/coroner services in the jurisdiction.
  - Outline the average annual number of Part I violent crimes reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for calendar years 2020, 2021, and 2022 by the state (and for applicant units of local government, the local data, if available) and include a discussion of the impact on the laboratory's resources and needs based on the reported data.
  
- b. Project Design and Implementation
  - Describe the strategy to address the needs identified in the Description of the Issue.
  - Describe how the project will achieve one (or more) of the Coverdell Program's purposes/objectives:

- To carry out all or a substantial part of a program intended to improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services in the state, including those services provided by laboratories operated by the state and those operated by units of local government within the state.
  - To eliminate a backlog in the analysis of forensic science evidence, including, among other things, a backlog with respect to firearms examination, latent prints, impression evidence, toxicology, digital evidence, fire evidence, controlled substances, forensic pathology, questioned documents, and trace evidence.
  - To train, assist, and employ forensic laboratory personnel and medicolegal death investigators, as needed, to eliminate such a backlog.
  - To address emerging forensic science issues (such as statistics, contextual bias, and uncertainty of measurement) and emerging forensic science technology (such as high throughput automation, statistical software, and new types of instrumentation).
  - To educate and train forensic pathologists.
  - To fund medicolegal death investigation systems to facilitate accreditation of medical examiner and coroner offices and certification of medicolegal death investigators.
  - Demonstrate the soundness of the approach to improve forensic services. Specifically outline the impact the proposed project will have on laboratory operations and/or forensic science discipline.
  - Discuss the feasibility of the proposed project, including likelihood of achieving the desired goals within the proposed period of performance. Demonstrate awareness of the likelihood of the project achieving a measurable impact on improving forensic science and/or medical examiner/coroner services.
  - Demonstrate awareness of potential pitfalls and proposed mitigation strategies should pitfalls be encountered.
  - Describe a sustainability plan, as relevant, for activities once the award has completed. A non-exhaustive list of examples may include a plan for annual maintenance following purchase of new instrumentation, hand-off of activities assigned to grant funded staff, validation of newly purchased instrumentation and plan for continued casework following outsourcing.
- c. Capabilities and Competencies
- Describe the management structure for implementation of the strategy, including staffing and key partners. Describe how the partners, if any, will work together to implement the key project elements. Provide information, if any, on past efforts and/or outcomes as a result of this partnership, and why it will enhance efforts in this area.
  - Outline the qualifications and experience of proposed project staff to achieve the goals of the proposal.
  - Describe the demonstrated ability of the proposed staff to manage the effort.
- d. Plan for Collecting the Data Required for This Solicitation's Performance Measures
- Describe the process for measuring project performance.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the [Coverdell Competitive performance measures](#), the specific section(s) that are relevant to the proposed project and the plans for collecting said data. All Coverdell grantees are required to report these specific programmatic metrics and content outlining the progress and impact of the project. In addition, the applicant is asked to consider what other metrics may be of use in demonstrating the successful outcome of the program/project.
- Identify who will collect the data, who is responsible for performance measurements, and how the information will be used to guide and evaluate the project's impact.
- Describe the process to accurately report data.

Note: An applicant is **not** required to submit performance data with the application. Rather, performance measure information is included to provide notice that award recipients will be required to submit performance data as part of each award's reporting requirements.

OJP will require each award recipient to submit regular performance data that show the completed work's results. The performance data directly relate to the solicitation goals and objectives identified in the "[Goals and Objectives](#)" section.

Applicants can visit [OJP's performance measurement page](#) at [www.ojp.gov/performance](http://www.ojp.gov/performance) for more information on performance measurement activities.

BJA will require award recipients to submit performance measure data and performance reports in JustGrants. BJA will provide further guidance on the post-award submission process, if the applicant is selected for award. A list of performance measure questions for this program can be found [here](#). Some measures are presented as examples, while others are the exact measures that every recipient will be expected to address.

#### [Note on Project Evaluations](#)

An applicant that proposes to use award funds through this solicitation to conduct project evaluations must follow the guidance in the "[Note on Project Evaluations](#)" section in the [Application Resource Guide](#).

#### [Application Goals, Objectives, Deliverables, and Timeline Web-Based Form](#)

The applicant will submit the project's goals, objectives, deliverables and timeline in the JustGrants web-based form. This is a summary of the goals, objectives, deliverables, and timeline that relate to the proposal narrative. The applicant will also enter the projected fiscal year and quarter that each objective and deliverable will be completed. Please refer to the [Application Submission Job Aid](#) for step-by-step directions.

- **Goals:** The applicant should describe the project's intent to change, reduce, or eliminate the problem noted in the proposal narrative.
- **Program Objectives and Timeline:** The applicant should include objectives to accomplish its goals. Objectives are specific, measurable actions to reach the project's desired results. The included timelines should be clearly linked to the goal.
- **Deliverables and Timeline:** Project deliverables refer to outputs—tangible (for example, a report or a website) or intangible (for example, greater feelings of safety reported by

the community)—that are documented and submitted within the scope of a project. Deliverables include timelines.

#### [Deliverables Expected by Successful Applicants](#)

All Coverdell grantees are required to report these [Coverdell Competitive performance measures](#) and content outlining the progress and impact of the project on a semi-annual basis. In addition, the applicant is asked to consider what other metrics may be of use in demonstrating the successful outcome of the program/project.

Program objectives and deliverables should be included in one timeline. Deliverables for this program include submission of performance data a list of which can be found in this link: [Coverdell Competitive performance measures](#).

#### [Budget and Associated Documentation](#)

##### **Permissible Expenses**

The types of expenses listed below may generally be paid with Coverdell funds. Federal funds must be used to supplement existing state and local funds for program activities, and must not supplant funds that have been appropriated for the same purpose. Please refer to the DOJ Grants Financial Guide, section 2.3, “Standards for Financial Management Systems,” for more information on supplanting.

**Note:** The following list details the types of expenses allowed under the Coverdell Program. These expenses should NOT be used as budget categories—instead they are to be incorporated into the appropriate standard OJP budget categories. For more information on OJP’s standard budget format, see the section titled What an Application Should Include.

- **Salary and benefits of laboratory employees.** Funds may be used for forensic science or medical examiner/coroner office personnel, fellowships, visiting scientists, interns, consultants, or temporary staff.
- **Overtime for laboratory staff.** Funds may be used to pay overtime for laboratory scientists (excluding executive personnel) to directly examine, analyze, and interpret physical and/or digital evidence in criminal matters. Any payments for overtime must be in accordance with the applicable provisions of the DOJ Financial Guide.
- **Computerization.** Funds may be used to upgrade, replace, lease, or purchase computer hardware and software for forensic analyses and data management.
- **Laboratory equipment.** Funds may be used to upgrade, lease, or purchase forensic laboratory or medical examiner/coroner office equipment and instrumentation.
- **Supplies.** Funds may be used to acquire forensic laboratory or medical examiner/coroner office supplies.
- **Accreditation.** Funds may be used to prepare for laboratory accreditation by the ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB), National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME), the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA), International Association of Coroners & Medical Examiners (IAC&ME) or other appropriate, accrediting bodies for forensic science and/or medicolegal death investigation. Funds may also be used for application and maintenance fees charged by appropriate accrediting bodies. Per 34 U.S.C. §10562(2), such an accrediting body must be “an accrediting body that is a signatory to an internationally recognized arrangement and that offers accreditation to forensic science conformity assessment bodies using an



accreditation standard that is recognized by that internationally recognized arrangement.”

An applicant that proposes to use any portion of the grant amount to fund a forensic science laboratory system, including any laboratory operated by a unit of local government within the state, that is not accredited (as set out in the Coverdell law) will be required to use (or, as applicable, must require any unaccredited subrecipient forensic science laboratory system to use) a portion of the grant amount for accreditation purposes. Coverdell awardees must use grant funds to prepare and apply for accreditation of any FY 2024 Coverdell grant-funded unaccredited forensic laboratory system, including any laboratory operated by a unit of local government within the state, not more than 2 years after the FY 2024 Coverdell award date.

- **Education, training, and certification.** Funds may be used for appropriate internal and external training of staff that are involved directly and substantially in providing forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services. In appropriate cases, funds also may be used for fees charged by appropriate certifying bodies for certification of staff in specific forensic discipline areas. All education, training, and certification activities must be designed to improve forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services. The grant application should demonstrate that the proposed training or certification is directly related to the job position and duties of the individual(s) receiving the training or seeking certification. OJP recognizes the benefit of attending discipline-related conferences to receive training and/or education, however, it is recommended that the applicant consider the cost-effectiveness of this option compared to other viable modes of training. For example, hosting onsite training or attending a local program may be more suitable for the applicant’s personnel and organization.
- **Facilities.** Funds may be used for program expenses related to facilities, provided that the expenses are directly attributable to improving forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services. Funds may also be used for renovation and/or construction undertaken as part of the applicant’s program to improve forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services.
- **Limitations on use of funds for costs of new facility.** The Coverdell law limits the amount of funds that may be used for the costs of a new facility or facilities (34 U.S.C. § 10564(c)). Maximum amounts are determined by the total amount of the Coverdell grants received (including both formula and competitive funds) and the total amount of funds available for Coverdell grants nationwide. The maximum amounts that may be used for costs of new facilities are as follows below. Note that estimates and calculations are based on the assumption that the total available funds for Coverdell awards in FY 2024 (Formula and Competitive) will be \$30,319,578. Please refer to the discussion under Available Funding.

Grants that exceed 0.6 percent of the total available funds. If an applicant state receives grants whose total amount exceeds 0.6 percent of the total available funds (estimated here at \$181,917), the amount of the grant that can be used for the costs of any new facility cannot exceed the sum of 80 percent of 0.6 percent of the total available funds (such 80 percent estimated here at \$145,534) plus 40 percent of the amount of the grant in excess of 0.6 percent of the total available funds.

For example, if \$30,319,578 were to become available for Coverdell awards in FY 2024 and a state were to receive a total Coverdell grant of \$303,196, no more than \$194,046 may be used for the costs of any new facility.

A sample calculation for a \$303,196 grant would be as follows:

80 percent of 0.6 percent of the total available funds:  $\$181,917 \times .80 = \$145,534$ .

Amount in excess of \$ 303,196:  $\$303,196 - \$181,917 = \$121,279$

40 percent of amount in excess of \$303,196:  $\$121,279 \times .40 = \$48,512$ .

Sum of  $\$145,534 + \$48,512 = \$194,046$ .

Estimates and calculations are based on the assumption that the total available funds for ALL Coverdell awards (formula and competitive) in FY 2024 will be \$30,319,578.

- **Administrative expenses.** Not more than 10 percent of the total amount of a Coverdell grant may be used for a recipient's administrative expenses.

Program activity involving forensic genetic genealogical DNA analysis and searching (FGGS) is subject to the DOJ [Interim Policy on Forensic Genetic Genealogical DNA Analysis and Searching](#) or to the final policy, when issued. See Performance Measures for additional required grantee reporting on FGGS activities.

**Note on the use of funds to address opioid- and synthetic drug-related challenges:** The application should demonstrate, wherever applicable, how any proposed use of funds would address challenges that opioids and/or synthetic drugs have brought to the forensic science community, as described in the "Important Note" under "Objectives" in the Program Description. To facilitate this, an applicant should annotate each line item in the budget as "opioid- and/or synthetic drug-related" (addressing the opioid and/or synthetic drug crisis) or "non-opioid- or synthetic drug-related." Coverdell funds are available for permissible uses that would not address the opioid and synthetic drug related challenges. However, applications requesting Coverdell funds for projects that address specified opioid and synthetic drug related challenges to the forensic science community will be given priority consideration in award decisions over applications not requesting funds for such projects.

#### **Funding Restrictions (Expenses That Are Not Permitted)**

1. **Funds to conduct research**, although applicants may address emerging forensic science issues and technology through implementation of new technologies and processes into public laboratories.
2. **Expenses other than those listed above** (including expenses for general law enforcement functions or non-forensic investigatory functions).
3. **Costs for any new facility** that exceed the limits described above.
4. **Recipient administrative expenses** (direct or indirect) that exceed 10 percent of the total grant amount.
5. The use of funds for the purchase and/or lease of vehicles, such as crime scene vans.
6. The use of BJA grant funds for unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), including unmanned aircraft vehicles (UAV), and all accompanying accessories to support UAS/UAV, is unallowable.

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

#### [Budget Detail and Narrative Web-Based Form](#)

The applicant will complete the JustGrants web-based budget form, which includes both detailed calculations and budget narrative sections.

For additional information about how to prepare a budget for federal funding, see the “[Application Resource Guide](#)” section on [Budget Preparation and Submission Information](#) and the technical steps to complete the budget form in JustGrants in the [Complete the Application in JustGrants: Budget](#) training.

#### [Prior Approval, Planning, and Reporting of Conference/Meeting/Training Costs](#)

OJP strongly encourages every applicant that proposes to use award funds for any conference-, meeting-, or training-related activity (or similar event) to review carefully—before submitting an application—the [Application Resource Guide](#) for information on prior approval, planning, and reporting of conference/meeting/training costs.

#### [Costs Associated With Language Assistance \(if applicable\)](#)

If an applicant proposes a program or activity that would deliver services or benefits to individuals, the costs of taking reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to those services or benefits for individuals with limited English proficiency may be allowable. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for information on costs associated with language assistance.

#### [Unmanned Aircraft Systems](#)

The use of BJA grant funds for unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), including unmanned aircraft vehicles (UAV), and all accompanying accessories to support UAS or UAV, is unallowable.

#### [Budget/Financial Attachments](#)

##### [Pre-Agreement \(Pre-Award\) Costs \(if applicable\)](#)

Pre-agreement costs are defined as costs requiring approval incurred by the applicant prior to the start date of the period of performance of the federal award. OJP does not typically approve pre-agreement costs. If a successful applicant, in anticipation of the Federal award, but before the start date of the period of performance, incurs costs which are necessary for efficient and timely performance of the funded project, those costs may not be charged to the award. See the “Costs Requiring Prior Approval” section in the [DOJ Grants Financial Guide Post-Award Requirements](#) for more information.

##### [Indirect Cost Rate Agreement \(if applicable\)](#)

Indirect costs are costs of an organization that are not readily assignable to a particular project but are necessary to the operation of the organization and the performance of the project. Examples of costs usually treated as indirect include those incurred for facility operation and maintenance, depreciation, and administrative salaries. The requirements for the development and submission of indirect cost proposals and cost allocation plans are listed in Appendices III–VII of 2 C.F.R. Part 200. A non-federal applicant should follow the guidelines applicable to its type of organization. If applicable, an applicant with a current federally approved indirect cost rate agreement will upload it as an attachment in JustGrants. See the [DOJ Financial Guide](#) for additional information on [Indirect Cost Rate Agreement](#).

#### Consultant Rate (if applicable)

Costs for consultant services require prior approval from OJP. If the proposed project expects to fund consultant services, compensation for individual consultant services is to be reasonable and consistent with that paid for similar services in the marketplace. See the [DOJ Grants Financial Guide](#) for information on the consultant rates, which require prior approval from OJP.

#### Limitation on Use of Award Funds for Employee Compensation for Awards Over \$250,000; Waiver (if applicable)

If an applicant proposes to hire employees with Federal award funds, for any award of more than \$250,000 made under a funding opportunity, an award recipient may not use federal funds to pay total cash compensation (salary plus cash bonuses) to any employee of the recipient at a rate that exceeds 110 percent of the maximum annual salary payable to a member of the federal government's Senior Executive Service (SES) at an agency with a Certified SES Performance Appraisal System for that year. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for information on the "Limitation on Use of Award Funds for Employee Compensation for Awards over \$250,000; Waiver."

#### Disclosure of Process Related to Executive Compensation (if applicable)

This notice of funding opportunity expressly modifies the Application Resource Guide by not incorporating its "Disclosure of Process Related to Executive Compensation" provisions. Applicants to this funding opportunity are not required to provide this disclosure.

#### **Additional Application Components**

The applicant will attach the additional requested documentation in JustGrants.

#### Curriculum Vitae or Resumes

Provide resumes of all laboratory scientists who will be significantly involved in substantive aspects of the proposed project.

#### Letters of Support

Applicants should include, for each named supporting entity, a signed letter of support that outlines the supporting entity's reasons for supporting for the project. Applications submitted from two or more entities are encouraged to submit signed letters of support that provide a detailed description of why the proposed project should receive federal funding.

Each letter of support may include the following: (1) a description of the relationship between the applicant entity and the supporting entity; (2) a description of the need and what benefits would be gained from the project; (3) a description of the applicant's capacity to complete the proposed project. Letters of support should be signed and then submitted as one separate attachment to the application.

#### **Coverdell Statutory Certifications**

As described above in the Eligibility section, the Coverdell law provides that, to request a grant, each applicant must submit **five** certifications specific to the Coverdell Program. (Applicants requesting funds for only medical examiner's offices or coroner's offices are not required to submit the certification regarding accreditation. (See 34 U.S.C. § 10562(2).) A certification may only be completed by an official familiar with its requirements and authorized to certify on behalf of the applicant agency (i.e., the agency applying directly to BJA). **All five** certifications **must** be completed using these templates. Certifications made on behalf of subrecipients of award funds—rather than certifications made on behalf of the agency applying directly to BJA—are not

acceptable to satisfy the certification requirements. The [five required Coverdell statutory certifications](#) are as follows:

1. Certification as to [Plan for Forensic Science Laboratories](#) or [Application from a Unit of Local Government](#)
2. Certification as to [Generally Accepted Laboratory Practices and Procedures](#)
3. Certification as to [Forensic Science Laboratory System Accreditation](#) (Applicants requesting funds for only medical examiner's offices or coroner's offices are not required to submit this certification.)
4. Certification as to [Use of Funds for New Facilities](#) (This must be submitted even if no funds are proposed to be used for new facilities.)
5. Certification as to [External Investigations](#) and [Attachment](#)

**Please note:** Specific information and guidance with respect to the "Certification as to External Investigations" are provided above, under Eligibility. Certifying officials must read and review this information and guidance prior to executing the certifications.

### **External Investigations Attachment**

All applicants are to provide the name(s) of the existing "government entity" (or entities) that is the subject of the certification that: A government entity exists and an appropriate process is in place to conduct independent external investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct substantially affecting the integrity of the forensic results committed by employees or contractors of any forensic laboratory system, medical examiner's office, coroner's office, law enforcement storage facility, or medical facility in the state that will receive a portion of the grant amount.

Note that funds **will not be made available** to applicant agencies that fail to provide the necessary information. **The [five certifications and the external investigations attachment](#) should be attached as separate files with appropriately descriptive file names.**

### **Forensic Laboratory Accreditation Documentation (if applicable)**

Applicants should provide documentation of current accreditation with the application for any accredited laboratory (including a subrecipient laboratory) that is to receive funds under the FY 2024 Coverdell award. Acceptable types of documentation of current accreditation include: an electronic (scanned) copy of the current accreditation certificate(s), a digital photograph of the current accreditation certificate(s), or a letter from the accrediting body that includes the certificate number. Additionally, if a certificate references another document that contains key information on the type or scope of the accreditation, provide a copy of that supplemental documentation. Independent accrediting or certifying organizations may include ANAB, NAME, A2LA, AC&ME, or other appropriate accrediting bodies. Per 34 U.S.C. § 10562 (2), such an accrediting body would be "an accrediting body that is a signatory to an internationally recognized arrangement and that offers accreditation to forensic science conformity assessment bodies using an accreditation standard that is recognized by that internationally recognized arrangement."

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

### **Potential Environmental Impact Coversheet and Checklist—National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

Each applicant is to submit a BJA Programmatic Coversheet and Checklist with its application to assist BJA 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 Programmatic Checklist](#).
- Attach the completed documents to the grant application.

The applicant should also submit a coversheet and BJA Programmatic Checklist for any organization identified in the budget worksheet that will receive grant funds through a subaward 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 BJA's NEPA Process, please go to <https://bj.a.ojp.gov/national-environmental-policy-act-nepa-guidance>.

### ***Disclosures and Assurances***

The applicant will address the following disclosures and assurances.

#### ***Disclosure of Lobbying Activities***

The SF-LLL attachment that was completed and submitted in Grants.gov is attached to this section.

#### ***Applicant Disclosure of Duplication in Cost Items***

To ensure funding coordination across grant making agencies, and to avoid unnecessary or inappropriate duplication among grant awards, the applicant will disclose if it has any pending applications for federal funding, including pending applications for subawards of federal funds. Complete the JustGrants web-based Applicant Disclosure of Duplication in Cost Items form. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

#### ***DOJ Certified Standard Assurances***

Review and accept the DOJ Certified Standard Assurances in JustGrants. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

#### ***DOJ Certifications Regarding Lobbying; Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; Drug-Free Workplace Requirements; Law Enforcement and Community Policing***

Review and accept in JustGrants the DOJ Certifications Regarding Lobbying; Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; Drug-Free Workplace Requirements; Law Enforcement and Community Policing. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

#### ***Applicant Disclosure and Justification – DOJ High-Risk Grantees***

If applicable, submit the DOJ High-Risk Disclosure and Justification as an attachment in JustGrants. A DOJ High-Risk Grantee is an award 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; noncompliance with award terms and conditions on prior awards or is otherwise not responsible. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

## **Application Review Information**

### **Review Criteria**

#### ***Basic Minimum Review Criteria***

OJP screens applications to ensure they meet the basic minimum requirements prior to conducting the peer review. Although specific requirements may vary, the following are requirements for all OJP solicitations:

- The application must be submitted by an eligible type of applicant.
- The application must request funding within any stated programmatic funding limits or boundaries.
- The application must be responsive to the scope of the solicitation.
- The application must include all items necessary to meet the basic minimum requirements.

#### ***Merit Review Criteria***

Applications that meet the basic minimum requirements will be evaluated by peer reviewers on how the proposed project/program addresses the following criteria:

- **Statement of the Problem/Description of the Issue (25%):** evaluate the applicant's understanding of the program/issue to be addressed.
- **Project Design and Implementation (45%):** evaluate the strength of the proposal, including information provided in the goals, objectives, timelines, and deliverables web-based form.
- **Capabilities and Competencies (10%):** evaluate the applicant's administrative and technical capacity to successfully accomplish the goals and objectives.
- **Plan for Collecting the Data Required for this Solicitation's Performance Measures (10%):** evaluate the applicant's understanding of the performance data reporting requirements and the plan for collecting the required data.
- **Budget (10%):** evaluate for completeness, cost effectiveness, and allowability (e.g., reasonable, allocable, and necessary for project activities).
  - Total cost of the project relative to the perceived benefit.
  - Use of existing resources to conserve costs.
  - Cost-effectiveness of proposed activities applicable to backlog reduction and/or timeliness of forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services
  - Cost-effectiveness of proposed activities applicable to improvement in forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services.
  - Cost-effectiveness of education and training as related to improvement of forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services.

#### ***Other Review Criteria/Factors***

Other important considerations for OJP include geographic diversity, strategic priorities (specifically including, but not limited to, those priority areas already mentioned, if applicable), available funding, past performance, and the extent to which the Budget web-based form accurately explains project costs that are reasonable, necessary, and otherwise allowable under federal law and applicable federal cost principles. Costs are allowable when they are reasonable, allocable to, and necessary for the performance of the federal award, and when they comply with the funding statute and agency requirements (to include the conditions of the

award), including the cost principles set out in the [Uniform Requirements 2 C.F.R. Part 200, Subpart E](#).

### ***Risk Criteria/Factors***

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 with one or more prior federal awards has a satisfactory record of performance, integrity, and business ethics, OJP checks whether the applicant is listed in SAM.gov 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.gov.

Important note on Responsibility/Qualification Data (formerly FAPIIS): An applicant may review and comment on any information about its organization that currently appears in SAM.gov and was entered by a federal awarding agency. OJP will consider such comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in SAM.gov, in its assessment of the risk posed by the applicant.

### **Review Process**

Applications submitted under this solicitation that meet the basic minimum requirements will be evaluated for technical merit by a peer review panel(s) in accordance with OJP peer review policy and procedures using the review criteria listed above. Absent explicit statutory authorization or written delegation of authority to the contrary, all final award decisions will be made by the Assistant Attorney General, who may consider not only peer review ratings and BJA recommendations, but also other factors as indicated in this section.

## **Federal Award Administration Information**

### **Federal Award Notices**

Generally, award notifications are made by the end of the current Federal fiscal year, September 30. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for information on award notifications and instructions.

### **Evidence-Based Programs or Practices**

OJP strongly encourages the use of data and evidence in policymaking and program development for criminal justice, juvenile justice, and crime victim services. For additional information and resources on evidence-based programs or practices (programs or practices that have been evaluated as effective), see the [Application Resource Guide](#).

### **Information Regarding Potential Evaluation of Programs and Activities**

OJP may conduct or support an evaluation of the projects and activities funded under this solicitation. For additional information on what should be included in the application, see the [Application Resource Guide](#) section entitled “Information Regarding Potential Evaluation of Programs and Activities.”

### **Administrative, National Policy, and Other Legal Requirements**

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 the 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 [Application Resource Guide](#).

### **Civil Rights Compliance**

If a successful applicant accepts funding from OJP—as a recipient of OJP funding—that award recipient must comply with certain federal civil rights laws that prohibit it from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, or disability in how the recipient delivers its program’s services or benefits and in its employment practices. The civil rights laws that may be applicable to the award include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), the nondiscrimination provisions of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (Safe Streets Act), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. These and other federal civil rights laws are discussed in greater detail here: “[Overview of Legal Requirements Generally Applicable to OJP Grants and Cooperative Agreements - FY 2024 Awards](#)” under the “Civil Rights Requirements” section, and additional resources are available from the [OJP Office for Civil Rights](#).

Part of complying with civil rights laws that prohibit national origin discrimination includes recipients taking reasonable steps to ensure that people who are limited in their English proficiency (LEP) because of their national origin have meaningful access to a recipient’s program and activity. An LEP person is one whose first language is not English and who has a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. To help recipients meet this obligation to serve LEP persons, DOJ has published a number of resources, including a language access assessment and planning tool, which are available at <https://www.lep.gov/language-access-planning>. Additional resources are available at <https://www.ojp.gov/program/civil-rights-office/limited-english-proficient-lep>. If the award recipient proposes a program or activity that would deliver services or benefits to LEP individuals, the recipient may use grant funds to support the costs of taking reasonable steps (e.g., interpretation or translation services) to provide meaningful access. Similarly, recipients are responsible for ensuring that their programs and activities are readily accessible to qualified individuals with disabilities. Applicants for OJP funding must allocate grant funds or explain how other available resources will be used to ensure meaningful and full access to their programs. For example, grant funds can be used to support American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter services for deaf or hard of hearing individuals or the purchase of adaptive equipment for individuals with mobility or cognitive disabilities. For resources, see <http://www.ADA.gov> or contact OJP.

### **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 Requirements as set out at 2 C.F.R. 200.303, comply with standards for financial and program management. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

### **Information Technology Security Clauses**

An application in response to this solicitation may require inclusion of information related to information technology security. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for more information.

## **General Information About Post-Federal Award Reporting Requirements**

In addition to the deliverables described in the "[Program Description](#)" section, all award recipients under this solicitation will be required to submit certain reports and data.

Required reports. Award recipients must submit quarterly financial reports, semi-annual performance reports, final financial and performance reports, and, if applicable, an annual audit report in accordance with the Part 200 Uniform Requirements or specific award conditions.

Coverdell grantees are required to submit a final report that must, among other things: (1) include a summary and assessment of the program carried out with FY 2024 grant funds, (2) identify the number and type of cases accepted during the FY 2024 award period by the forensic laboratory or laboratories that received FY 2024 grant funds, (3) cite the specific improvements in forensic science and medical examiner/coroner services (including any reduction in forensic analysis backlog) that occurred as a direct result of the FY 2024 grant award, and (4) detail the progress of any unaccredited forensic science service provider that received FY 2024 grant funds toward obtaining accreditation. Future awards and fund drawdowns may be withheld if reports are delinquent.

Further, as noted earlier under Eligibility, for each fiscal year of an award, recipients will be required to report to BJA on an annual basis:

1. The number and nature of any allegations of serious negligence or misconduct substantially affecting the integrity of forensic results.
2. Information on the referrals of such allegations (e.g., the government entity or entities to which referred, the date of referral).
3. The outcome of such referrals (if known as of the date of the report).
4. If any such allegations were not referred, the reason(s) for the nonreferral.

Future awards and fund drawdowns may be withheld if reports are delinquent (in appropriate cases, OJP may require additional reports).

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

## **Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s)**

For OJP contact(s), contact information for Grants.gov, and contact information for JustGrants, see the solicitation Synopsis.

## **Other Information**

### **Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. §§ 552 and 552a)**

See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for information on the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. §§ 552 and 552a).

### **Provide Feedback to OJP**

See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for information on how to provide feedback to OJP.

## **Performance Measures**

All Coverdell grantees are required to report specific programmatic metrics (see [Performance Measures](#)).

## Application Checklist

### BJA FY24 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program—Competitive

This application checklist has been created as an aid in developing an application. For more information, reference [The OJP Application Submission Steps in the OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) and the [DOJ Application Submission Checklist](#).

#### Pre-Application

##### *Before Registering in Grants.gov*

- Confirm your entity’s registration in the [System Award Management \(SAM.gov\)](#) is active through the solicitation period; submit a new or renewal registration in SAM.gov if needed (see [Application Resource Guide](#))

##### *Register in Grants.gov*

- Acquire an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) and a Grants.gov username and password (see [Application Resource Guide](#))
- Acquire AOR confirmation from the E-Business Point of Contact (E-Biz POC) (see [Application Resource Guide](#))

##### *Find the Funding Opportunity*

- Search for the funding opportunity in Grants.gov using the opportunity number, assistance listing number, or keyword(s)
- Access the funding opportunity and application package (see Step 7 in the [Application Resource Guide](#))
- Sign up for Grants.gov email [notifications](#) (optional) (see [Application Resource Guide](#))
- Read [Important Notice: Applying for Grants in Grants.gov](#) (about [browser compatibility and special characters in file names](#))
- Read OJP policy and guidance on conference approval, planning, and reporting available at <https://www.ojp.gov/funding/financialguidedojo/iii-postaward-requirements#6q3y8> (see [Application Resource Guide](#))

##### *Review the Overview of Post-Award Legal Requirements*

- Review the “[Overview of Legal Requirements Generally Applicable to OJP Grants and Cooperative Agreements – FY 2024 Awards](#)” in the [OJP Funding Resource Center](#).

##### *Review the Scope Requirement*

- The federal amount requested is within the allowable limit(s) of \$500,000.

##### *Review Eligibility Requirement*

- Review the “Eligibility” section in the Synopsis and “Eligibility Information” section in the solicitation.

#### Application Step 1

After registering with SAM.gov, submit the SF-424 and SF-LLL in Grants.gov

- In Section 8F of the SF-424, include the name and contact information of the individual **who will complete the application in JustGrants and the SF-LLL in Grants.gov**
- Submit Intergovernmental Review (if applicable)

Within 48 hours after the SF-424 and SF-LLL submission in Grants.gov, receive four (4) Grants.gov email notifications:

- A submission receipt
- A validation receipt
- A grantor agency retrieval receipt
- An agency tracking number assignment

If no Grants.gov receipt and validation email is received, or if error notifications are received:

- Contact BJA or Grants.gov Customer Support Hotline at 800-518-4726, 606-545-5035, [Grants.gov customer support](#), or [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov) regarding technical difficulties (see [“Application Resource Guide” section on Experiencing Unforeseen Technical Issues](#))

Within 24 hours after receipt of confirmation emails from Grants.gov, the individual in Section 8F of the SF-424 will receive an email from JustGrants with login instructions.

- Proceed to Application Step 2 and complete application in JustGrants

## **Application Step 2**

Submit the following information in JustGrants:

### **Application Components**

- Entity and User Verification (First Time Applicant)
- Standard Applicant information (SF-424 information from Grants.gov)
- Proposal Abstract\*
- Proposal Narrative\*
- Application Goals, Objectives, Deliverables, and Timeline web-based form
- **Five certifications required by the Coverdell law\***:
  6. Certification as to [Plan for Forensic Science Laboratories](#) or [Application from a Unit of Local Government](#)
    - The applicant is to submit only one version of the “Certification as to Plan for Forensic Science Laboratories.” DO NOT submit both versions of this certification. Applicant *states* are to submit the “Application from a State” version only; applicant *units of local government* are to submit the “Application from a Unit of Local Government” version only.
  2. Certification as to [Generally Accepted Laboratory Practices and Procedures](#)
  3. Certification as to [Forensic Science Laboratory System Accreditation](#)
    - Applicants requesting funds for only medical examiner’s offices or coroner’s offices in the state are not required to submit this certification.
  4. Certification as to [Use of Funds for New Facilities](#)
    - Applicants must submit this certification even if no new facilities are being constructed.
  5. Certification as to [External Investigations](#) and [Attachment](#)

### **Budget and Associated Documentation**

- Budget Detail Narrative and web-based form\*
- Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire (see [Application Resource Guide](#))
- Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable) (see [Application Resource Guide](#))

### **Additional Application Components**

- Request and Justification for Employee Compensation; Waiver (if applicable) (see [Application Resource Guide](#))
- Letters of Support (if applicable)
- Resumes of key personnel (if applicable)
- List of procurement contracts (if applicable)
- External Investigations Attachment
- Forensic Laboratory Accreditation Documentation
- Potential Environmental Impact Coversheet and Checklist

### **Disclosures and Assurances**

- [Disclosure of Lobbying Activities \(SF-LLL\)](#) (see [Application Resource Guide](#))
- Applicant Disclosure of Duplication in Cost Items (see [Application Resource Guide](#))
- DOJ Certified Standard Assurances (see [Application Resource Guide](#))
- DOJ Certifications Regarding Lobbying; Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; Drug-Free Workplace Requirements; Law Enforcement and Community Policing (see [Application Resource Guide](#))
- Applicant Disclosure and Justification – DOJ High-Risk Grantees (if applicable) (see [Application Resource Guide](#))

***\*Note: Items designated with an asterisk must be submitted for an application to meet the basic minimum requirements review. If OJP determines that an application does not include the designated items, it will neither proceed to peer review, nor receive further consideration.***

### **Review, Certify, and Submit Application in JustGrants**

- Any validation errors will immediately display on screen after submission.
- Correct validation errors, if necessary, and then return to the “Certify and Submit” screen to submit the application. Access the [Application Submission Validation Errors Quick Reference Guide](#) for step-by-step instructions to resolve errors prior to submission.
- Once the application is submitted and validated, a confirmation message will appear at the top of the page. Users will also receive a notification in the “bell” alerts confirming submission.

If no JustGrants application submission confirmation email or validation is received, or if error notification is received —

- Contact the JustGrants Service Desk at 833-872-5175 or [JustGrants.Support@usdoj.gov](mailto:JustGrants.Support@usdoj.gov) regarding technical difficulties. See the [Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

## **Standard Solicitation Resources**

[Application Resource Guide](#) provides guidance to assist OJP grant applicants in preparing and submitting applications for OJP funding.

[DOJ Grants Financial Guide](#) serves as the primary reference manual to assist award recipients in fulfilling their fiduciary responsibility to safeguard grant funds and to ensure funds are used for the purposes for which they were awarded. It compiles a variety of laws, rules and regulations that affect the financial and administrative management of DOJ awards. This guide serves as a starting point for all award recipients and subrecipients of DOJ grants and cooperative agreements in ensuring the effective day-to-day management of awards.

[JustGrants Resources Website](#) is an entryway into information about JustGrants and the grants management system itself. Through this portal both award recipients and applicants can access training resource and user support options, find frequently asked questions, and sign up for the [JustGrants Update e-newsletter](#).

[JustGrants Application Submission Training page](#) offers helpful information and resources on the application process. This training page includes e-learning videos, reference guides, checklists, and other resources to help applicants complete an application.

[Weekly Training Webinars](#) are advertised here and provide opportunities for users to receive topic-specific training, direct technical assistance, and support on JustGrants system functionality.

## Frequently Asked Questions for the FY 2024 Paul Coverdell Competitive Solicitation

### **1. Q: Is a single applicant permitted to submit multiple applications under the current Coverdell Competitive Program?**

A: Yes, however only one award will be made to each applicant under the Coverdell Competitive Program. (Please note that if an applicant submits multiple versions of the same application, OJP will review only the most recent system-validated version submitted.)

### **2. Q: If an applicant from a unit of local government gets a Coverdell Competitive Award, does that affect the maximum amount the state can apply for under the formula grant?**

A: No. If an applicant unit of local government is the entity that receives a competitive award, that does not impact the maximum amount the state can apply for under this funding opportunity.

### **3. Q: I am a state agency. Do I have to apply through the SAA in order to be considered eligible?**

A: Yes, all state agencies must apply through the SAA.

### **4. Q: Do I have to be accredited in order to apply?**

A: Applicants do not have to be currently accredited to apply. However, Coverdell awardees must use grant funds to prepare and apply for accreditation of any FY 2024 Coverdell grant-funded unaccredited forensic laboratory system, including any laboratory operated by a unit of local government within the state, not more than 2 years after the FY 2024 Coverdell award date. Medical examiner's and coroner's offices are exempt from this accreditation requirement. The accrediting body must be *"a signatory to an internationally recognized arrangement" and one that "offers accreditation to forensic science conformity assessment bodies using an accreditation standard that is recognized by that internationally recognized arrangement[.]"*

### **5. Q: Our law enforcement agency is accredited (e.g., CALEA)—are we eligible to apply?**

A: With few exceptions, law enforcement agencies with law enforcement accreditation, rather than forensic laboratory or medical examiner accreditation, are not eligible for Coverdell funding. The accrediting body must be "a signatory to an internationally recognized arrangement" and one that "offers accreditation to forensic science conformity assessment bodies using an accreditation standard that is recognized by that internationally recognized arrangement[.]" See FAQ #4 above. Furthermore, for eligibility, the applicant must meet the definition of a forensic laboratory as outlined in the Definitions section of the solicitation.