

FAQs



ThomasLefebvre/Unsplash

BJA FY 2024 MISSING AND UNIDENTIFIED HUMAN REMAINS PROGRAM

MUHR Program—Solicitation Weblink

Please thoroughly review the Missing and Unidentified Human Remains (MUHR) Program solicitation for detailed information, including the questions and answer information referenced below.

<https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/O-BJA-2024-172155.pdf>

Eligible Applicants (General)

Question: There are various types of entities listed under Eligible Applicants (page 4) of the solicitation. How should an applicant that meets the general eligibility list decide on what Purpose Area to apply for?

Answer: The Eligible Applicants list is based on the overall program eligibility as defined in the statutory authority (legislation). From this list, eligible applicants will need to decide what Purpose Area(s) to apply under based on their service capabilities and ability to adhere to the goals, objectives, and deliverables for those Purpose Areas as listed in the MUHR Program solicitation. An applicant's proposal materials are expected to clearly identify the Purpose Area to which they are applying.

Eligible Applicants (General)

Question: What if an entity does not meet the Eligible Applicants listing (page 4) in the solicitation? Are they still able to apply directly under the MUHR Program and receive direct funding?

Answer: No, only the entities that are specifically listed under the Eligible Applicants section can apply and receive funding under the MUHR Program. The eligible applicant would be the entity responsible for applying and submitting the proposal materials and would ultimately be responsible for completing the various U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) report requirements, if awarded.

However, if an entity does not meet the eligibility requirement, they could form a collaborative partnership with an entity that does meet the eligible applicant requirement. As mentioned, the eligible applicant would be the entity that applies and submits the application materials under the MUHR Program.



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Eligible Applicants—Forensic Anthropology Laboratory

Question: Does a forensic anthropology laboratory at a state university meet the eligibility of a “publicly funded university forensic anthropology laboratories,” as listed under the Eligible Applicants section of the solicitation (page 4)?

Answer: A state university with an anthropology department, with a forensic tract with labs, would qualify as an eligible applicant under the statutory authority for the MUHR Program, assuming that the applicant also meets all of the other eligibility requirements outlined in the solicitation.

Eligibility—Purpose Area 3 (Services to Assist Small, Rural, and/or Tribal Entities)

Question: My agency is interested in assisting small, rural, and/or tribal entities at the state and local level. If so, should we apply under Purpose Area 3 (Services to Assist Small, Rural, and/or Tribal Entities)?

Answer: Please note that under Purpose Area 3, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) is seeking to award only one applicant that will be able to provide services to assist small, rural, and/or tribal entities—on a national scale. If an applicant seeks to assist small, rural, and/or tribal entities at the state and local levels only, then they should apply under Purpose Area 1 (Statewide Agencies) or Purpose Area 2 (Counties and/or Units of Local Government).

Requirement to Address Both Unidentified Human Remains and Missing Persons Cases

Question: Are applicants required to address both unidentified human remains and missing persons cases under their project?

Answer: If applicable, applicants should develop a collaborative approach and partner with other entities/agencies to cover both unidentified human remains and missing persons cases in their jurisdiction. This collaborative approach and partnership will help ensure that the applicant is able to address the overall goals,

objectives, and deliverables for the Purpose Area under which they are applying.

However, it is acceptable for an applicant to propose working only unidentified human remains or only missing persons cases (with the provision of a brief explanation and justification) if doing both is not feasible.

Applying Under Multiple Areas

Question: Can an applicant apply for multiple purpose areas under the MUHR Program?

Answer: Yes, if an applicant is requesting funding under multiple Purpose Areas, a separate proposal must be submitted for each Purpose Area to which they are applying.

Allowable Expense—Community Engagement Event

Question: Under the project, can we include community engagement costs such as those to convene a DNA gathering event (e.g., at the medical examiner’s office), where we push out announcements requesting anyone with a missing relative to show on a particular day for swabbing? In addition, could we include costs to pay for a food truck rental?

Answer: Costs associated with convening the DNA event is a permissible use of funds. However, costs related to food and refreshments is not allowable. Also, please ensure you adhere to the protocols in the MUHR solicitation regarding family reference samples.

Allowable Expense—Exhumation of Human Remains

Question: Is the exhumation of human remains an allowable expense?

Answer: Yes, the exhumation of human remains, as authorized by law, is an allowable cost. If an individual is exhumed and reburied by the funded applicant, then the reburial costs after the exhumation process is an allowable expense.

Note: Reburial or funeral costs after repatriation is not an allowable expense.

Allowable Expense—Expert Witness Personnel

Question: Can funding be used to pay for an expert witness(es) for trial through this program?

Answer: No. Program funding should be used for identification, reporting, and repatriation only.

Allowable Expense—Funding Usage for Identification Versus Trial Purposes

Question: Can an applicant use program funding for any activities that are beyond identifications purposes? For example, if it's determinable under the testing parameter, can an applicant continue with testing to determine the cause of death, moving more into the arena of building a criminal case and trial purposes?

Answer: No, program funding should be used for identification purposes and should not be used for building a criminal case or trial purposes.

Allowable Expense—Funeral and/or Burial Costs

Question: Can MUHR Program funding be used to pay for funeral and/or burial costs?

Answer: Once an individual is repatriated back to appropriate relatives (which is an allowable expense), funding is unallowable to pay for funeral and/or burial costs. However, please examine the information located under “Additional Resources—Office for Victims of Crime Victim Compensation Program” (page 9) for other potential DOJ assistance on funeral and/or burial costs.

Allowable Expense—Reallocated Time (Personnel)

Question: Is reallocated time an allowable expense under this program, or should applicants only pay overtime costs for current staff who will be engaged in the project?

Answer: Under the MUHR Program, funding can be used for salary costs (full-time, part-time, overtime) and benefits for personnel. This includes funding usage for hiring and maintaining staff directly engaged in performing

reporting (e.g., entry to the National Crime Information Center, National Missing and Unidentified Persons System Program, and, where applicable, the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program, ViCAP), as well as inventory, investigation, and identification (e.g., forensic analysis, to include family reference samples) of missing persons and/or unidentified human remains. This is in addition to other potential positions that are listed under “Permissible Uses of Funds—Salary and Benefits for Personnel” (page 28) in the solicitation.

BJA is unfamiliar with “reallocated time” for personnel costs that would be paid with grant funding. However, if this is referring to taking the person off a currently funded position in order to replace the funding of said position with grant funds—that would be “supplanting.” As stated within the solicitation, supplanting is not permitted.

Exhumation of Human Remains—NEPA Checklist

Question: Should the exhumation of human remains be included in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Checklist?

Answer: Yes, the exhumation of human remains will need to be addressed and included in the NEPA Checklist submission.

FBI's Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP)

Question: Can applicants enter any cases into ViCAP?

Answer: No. The cases to be entered into ViCAP are for “criminal cases” only. Cases submitted into the ViCAP database must meet the ViCAP criteria requirements related to this program and include:

- Persons where the circumstances indicate a strong possibility of foul play, and the victim is still missing.
- Human remains where the manner of death is known or suspected to be a homicide.

Please examine the [ViCAP Criteria Information](#) included in the solicitation on pages for more information.

Forensic Genetic Genealogical DNA Analysis (FGG) and Searching

Question: Can applicants use MUHR funding for FGG analysis on any cases?

Answer: No. DOJ's Interim Policy on Forensic Genetic Genealogical DNA Analysis and Searching (FGGS) specifically states that only unidentified human remains ruled as "homicides" can be subjected to FGG-utilizing grant funds. Further, prior approval is needed from BJA for cases ruled as "undetermined cause of death" or "suspected homicide" in order to proceed to FGG.

Program activity involving forensic FGG is subject to the DOJ Interim Policy on Forensic Genetic Genealogical DNA Analysis and Searching or the final policy, when issued.

Please examine the [DOJ Interim Policy on FGG DNA Analysis and Searching](#).

Question: If awarded, can funds be used to conduct genealogy in-house?

Answer: Yes, but you are required to complete the [BJA/FBI Archived FGG training](#) (available via the SAKI Virtual Academy), as well as any future BJA/FBI trainings, that may occur during the lifespan of the grant.

Question: My case only has a short tandem repeats (STR) profile in Combined DNA Index System (CODIS). Can I proceed to FGG?

Answer: You must have both STR and mtDNA profiles in CODIS before proceeding to FGG, however in the event you only have one technology, BJA may consider permission to proceed with only one, on a case-by-case basis.

Question: Is it required to utilize the FBI's Investigative Genetic Genealogy team?

Answer: No, however it is highly recommended to leverage their team for the tree-building/investigative portion of FGG as this is a free resource to grantees.

Question: What does it mean that we must utilize a FGG vendor that does single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) testing in-house?

Answer: The vendor lab must have the technology to process the evidence/sample for SNP profile in-house and cannot ship the evidence/sample to an alternate lab that does.

Question: Does a case need to be uploaded/updated in NCIC and NamUS prior to FGG?

Answer: Yes. Any case wishing to proceed to FGG must have the case uploaded and updated in NCIC, NamUS and ViCAP (as applicable) prior to FGG.

Inventory of Cases

Question: How do I report the number of unidentified human remains and missing persons cases found in my jurisdiction?

Answer: You can report these numbers separately in JustGrants. The instructions on how to do this can be found in the solicitation on pages 19 and 42.

Question: Are we allowed to limit the inventory and cases to be addressed under the project to cases where a known or suspected crime was the cause of death, or must we open this to all unidentified cases?

Answer: The applicant should inventory whatever cases fall directly under their investigative authority. If the applicant would be directly responsible for working the case, it should be included under their inventory.

Question: How do I report my final inventory at the end of the award?

Answer: BJA will provide a tracking sheet upon being awarded so that you may complete the inventory requirement at the end of your project/award.

Inventory—Inclusion of Additional Cases

Question: Can I add additional cases to the estimated cases I initially proposed to work in my application?

Answer: Yes, you may add additional cases to the already estimated cases that were initially proposed. The final inventory at the end of the award will capture all cases worked.

Project Principal Investigator— U.S. Citizenship

Question: Is there a requirement that the principal investigator must be a U.S. citizen?

Answer: No, there is no blanket requirement regarding grantee citizenship.

Permissible Uses of Funds— Project Evaluation Expenses

Question: Would project evaluations be considered a permissible use of funds? For example, an applicant would like to partner with a university to provide a project evaluation for their MUHR project. Is this allowed?

Answer: Although the “Note on Project Evaluations” section (page 22) mentions evaluations and specific attachments related to evaluations, this pertains to generalized information on project evaluations that is included in all Office of Justice Programs solicitation.

In contrast, the goals of the MUHR Program funding opportunity are to establish and expand programs to improve the reporting, transportation, processing, and identification of missing persons and unidentified human remains, including migrants. The MUHR Program is not seeking funding usage for project evaluations and is focused on the activities as defined under the Program Description. For further details, please examine the goals, objectives, and deliverables of the MUHR Program listed within the solicitation.

ABOUT BJA

BJA helps America’s state, local, and tribal jurisdictions reduce and prevent crime, lower recidivism, and promote a fair and safe criminal justice system. BJA provides a wide range of resources—including grants, funding, and training and technical assistance—to law enforcement, courts and corrections agencies, treatment providers, reentry practitioners, justice information sharing professionals, and community-based partners to address chronic and emerging criminal justice challenges nationwide. To learn more about BJA, visit bja.ojp.gov or follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/DOJBJA) and X ([@DOJBJA](https://twitter.com/DOJBJA)). BJA is a component of the Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs.

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