

BJA FY26 Missing and Unidentified Human Remains (MUHR) Program Appendix

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Definitions

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

- **Anthropology:** The examination of human skeletal remains, including skeletal recovery, development of biological profile, identity confirmation through skeletal and radiological means, trauma documentation, and time-since-death estimation.
- **Combined DNA Index System (CODIS):** The generic term used to describe the Federal Bureau of Investigation's program of support for criminal justice DNA databases, as well as the software used to run these databases. CODIS contains profiles from forensic evidence, Offenders/Arrestees, missing persons, unidentified human remains, and relatives of missing persons and can provide investigative information that may assist with identifications. There are three levels of CODIS: the Local DNA Index System (LDIS), used by individual laboratories; the State DNA Index System (SDIS), used at the state level to serve as a state's DNA database containing DNA profiles from LDIS laboratories; and the National DNA Index System (NDIS), managed by the FBI as the nation's DNA database containing all DNA profiles uploaded by participating states.

- **Direct Reference Samples (DRS):** An item collected directly from a missing individual, or an intimate personal effect belonging to the missing individual, for use in potential comparisons to recovered unidentified human remains. Examples include stored medical samples, baby teeth/dentures, a toothbrush, etc.
- **DNA Analysis:** Includes the handling, screening, DNA collection, laboratory testing, profile interpretation, and reporting of samples containing DNA. DNA analysis may be conducted on unidentified human remains, missing persons samples, or family reference samples.
- **DNA Profile:** Genetic sequence related to an individual contributor.
- **Familial DNA Searching:** An intentional or deliberate search of the DNA database conducted after a routine search for the purpose of potentially identifying close biological relatives of the unidentified human remains sample.
- **Family Reference Sample (FRS):** A DNA sample obtained from a potential relative to help identify missing persons (MP) or unidentified human remains (UHR). Relatives of a MP may voluntarily provide their DNA sample.
- **Fingerprint:** An impression left by the friction ridges of a human finger that can be used for the purpose of identification.
- **Forensic Genetic Genealogy (FGG):** The combination of genetic analysis using single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) testing with traditional historical and genealogical research to study family history. For forensic investigations, it can be used to connect unidentified DNA from forensic evidence or unidentified human remains to potential relatives in genealogical databases. This information can help point to the possible identity of the perpetrator or unidentified remains.
- **Mitochondrial DNA Analysis (mtDNA):** A forensic DNA technology that targets DNA found within the mitochondria of a cell. It is particularly useful in instances with limited sample or where the DNA is highly degraded such as heavily decomposed or skeletonized remains. Individuals (both male and female) along the same maternal line are expected to have the same mtDNA profile. Inclusion of a mtDNA profile as an additional technology in CODIS can help improve the chance of an association between an unidentified human remains (UHR) sample and a possible relative.
- **National DNA Index System (NDIS):** One part of CODIS, that contains the DNA profiles contributed by federal, state, and local participating forensic laboratories. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Federal Government, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Laboratory, and Puerto Rico participate in NDIS.
- **National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) Program:** A national centralized repository and resource center for locating missing persons (MP), identifying unidentified human remains (UHR), and repatriating unclaimed persons.

- **National Crime Information Center (NCIC):** A computerized index of criminal justice information (i.e., criminal record history, fugitives, stolen properties, MP). It is available to federal, state, and local law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies and is operational 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Data contained in NCIC is provided by the FBI; federal, state, local, and foreign criminal justice agencies; and authorized courts.
- **Odontology:** A specialized field of dentistry that involves the study of teeth and dental records that can help in identifying the remains of a deceased individual.
- **Rapid DNA; Rapid DNA Analysis:** Describes the fully automated (hands-free) process of developing a CODIS acceptable STR profile from a database, known, casework reference, or forensic sample. The “swab in, profile out” process consists of automated extraction, amplification, separation, detection, and allele calling without human intervention. Any Rapid DNA analysis done using MUHR funding must be done by an accredited laboratory and must adhere to the FBI’s Quality Assurance Standards. See [Rapid DNA-FBI](#) and [Quality Assurance Standards for Forensic DNA Testing Laboratories](#).
- **Records Management System (RMS):** An agency-wide system that provides for the storage, retrieval, retention, manipulation, archiving and viewing of information, records, documents, or files.
- **Short Tandem Repeat (STR) Analysis:** The most common type of forensic DNA technology used in criminal cases and other forensic applications. It can be used to help identify unidentified human remains, verify family relationships, and connect suspects to crime scene evidence.
- **Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (ViCAP):** A unit of the FBI responsible for the analysis of serial violent and sexual crimes, is situated within the Critical Incident Response Group's (CIRG) National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC). ViCAP maintains the largest investigative repository of major violent crime cases in the United States. It is designated to collect and analyze information about homicides, sexual assaults, missing persons, and other violent crimes involving unidentified human remains.
- **Y-STR Analysis:** A forensic DNA technology that targets DNA locations on the Y chromosome that is only carried by male individuals. Males along the same paternal line are expected to have the same Y-STR DNA profile. Inclusion of a Y-STR DNA profile as an additional technology in CODIS can help improve the chance of an association between a male unidentified human remains and a male relative.

Program Specific Requirements

DNA Analyses

- All DNA analyses (with the exception of FGG testing) performed using MUHR funding, to include Rapid DNA Analyses, must be done by an accredited laboratory and must

adhere to the FBI's Quality Assurance Standards. See [Quality Assurance Standards for Forensic DNA Testing Laboratories](#) and [Rapid DNA-FBI](#). See the [Definitions](#) section of this Appendix for additional information about Rapid DNA.

- A second DNA technology (mtDNA or Y-STR as appropriate) is highly recommended for UHR, FRS and DRS processed with MUHR funding for upload to CODIS to increase the chances of an identification assisted by CODIS. Awardees are highly encouraged to propose projects that incorporate the trio of DNA testing technologies (STR, mtDNA and Y-STR) with consideration for CODIS upload for all technologies.
- Family Reference Samples: Following FBI guidance and requirements, the relative of a missing person must voluntarily submit their DNA sample per a consent form. Law enforcement must oversee and confirm that the relative is who they say they are via a form of identification. The reference sample can only be used for identification purposes. Once and if a match is made, the law enforcement agency overseeing the case must be notified, as well as the supporting medical examiner/coroner. See *Certification as to Privacy Protections for Biological Family Reference Samples* in the Additional Application Components section of the NOFO.
- All DNA analyses conducted, and profiles generated, during the testing portion of this program must be maintained pursuant to all applicable federal privacy requirements, including those described in 34 U.S.C. § 12592(b)(3).

Forensic Genetic Genealogy (FGG)

- Award recipients utilizing MUHR funds for FGG must adhere to the [DOJ Interim Policy Forensic Genealogical DNA Analysis and Searching \(FGGS\)](#) document ("Interim Policy on FGGS"). The requirements regarding the use of MUHR funds for FGG may change in accordance with future iterations of the Interim Policy on FGGS. MUHR award recipients will be updated should changes occur that could impact their practices and/or performance metrics.
- In accordance with the Interim Policy on FGGS and forensic and investigative best practices in MP and UHR cases, the following must be met for each UHR case involving FGG for which MUHR funding is used:
 1. The UHR must be submitted for entry into NamUs and ViCAP.
 - MUHR awardees must ensure the UHR case has been submitted to ViCAP (where applicable) and NamUs prior to proceeding with FGG.
 2. The UHR must have an STR profile searching in CODIS.
 - An STR profile from the UHR must have been searched in CODIS and yielded no probative hits. Because missing person-related DNA records are searched in NDIS on at least a monthly basis, sufficient time should be allowed for CODIS searches to occur before proceeding to FGG. BJA will consider exceptions (e.g., an immediate and ongoing threat to public safety) on a case-by-case basis.

- If an STR profile is only searching in the SDIS or LDIS levels of CODIS, the awardee must work with their laboratory to pursue the feasibility of re-testing the sample to obtain a NDIS-eligible STR profile before proceeding to FGG.
 - MUHR awardees must also have *attempted* a second DNA technology (mtDNA or Y-STR as appropriate) for inclusion in CODIS prior to proceeding to FGG. If a case has only an STR profile in CODIS (and not a second technology), permission will be needed from BJA **before** proceeding to FGG.
 - Familial searching is not required for UHRs prior to proceeding to FGG, unless mandated by the awardee's state.
3. The UHR must be a suspected homicide victim.
- The use of MUHR funds for FGG is only permissible in those instances where the manner of death has been ruled as "homicide". Prior approval from BJA will be required prior to proceeding to FGG for cases where the manner of death is ruled as "undetermined," but in which investigators reasonably believe the remains are that of a suspected homicide victim. In these instances, BJA will seek confirmation that the investigating agency and prosecutor with appropriate jurisdiction are investigating the case as a suspected homicide and agree to proceed with FGG.
4. Investigator and Prosecutor concurrence must be obtained prior to proceeding with FGG.
- As outlined in Section VI in the Interim Policy on FGGS, awardees must collaborate with both the law enforcement agency and prosecutor with jurisdiction over the criminal investigation, who must agree with proceeding with FGG. As part of this decision, parties should document their consultation with the laboratory that performed the CODIS upload of the UHR DNA profile.

If an award is made for a project that proposes to use FGG, prior to receiving award funds, the recipient must submit an express certification regarding the above requirements involving the use of MUHR funds for FGG. Certification must be provided on the BJA-provided template found [here](#). Submission of this certification is not required at the time of application but is strongly encouraged. If an award is made for a project that proposes to use FGG, access to award funds will be withheld until this certification is received and approved by BJA.

- BJA highly recommends that the awardee leverage the FBI's resources for the tree-building/investigative portion of FGG (at no cost to the awardee).
- See the Performance Measures section of the NOFO for additional required grantee reporting on FGGS activities.

Database Reporting

- All qualifying cases processed with MUHR funding must be entered and updated in NamUs, NCIC, and (where applicable) the FBI's Violent Crime Apprehension Program (ViCAP) by the end of the grant period. Cross system reporting will facilitate better understanding of the circumstances and scope of MP and UHR cases in the U.S. and increase identifications and repatriations of unaddressed MP and UHR cases.
- An applicant who does not have the necessary law enforcement-level or medical examiner/coroner-level access to the required databases must either (1) obtain access themselves or (2) partner with the appropriate agency(s) that already has the necessary access. Partnering agencies must provide a Letter of Intent at the time of application. Please see the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and/or Letter of Intent section of the NOFO for more information regarding a partnering agency's engagement.
- Receiving funding under this NOFO **does not** grant access to NamUs or other restricted criminal justice databases. Only criminal justice agencies with appropriate authority may enter and update records—activities that are required under this NOFO. As such, applicants must ensure that project partners have the appropriate access and authority to perform these actions in NamUs and other applicable databases for the cases being supported with grant funds.

NamUs: Award recipients must:

- Collect and report information to NamUs regarding MP and/or UHR.
- Assist partners within the MP and/or UHR communities with upgrading existing data in the NamUs system in support of the efforts of states and units of local government to identify MP and unidentified remains through locating and documenting pertinent case information.

NCIC: Award recipients must:

- Report to NCIC and, when possible, to law enforcement authorities throughout the applicant's jurisdiction regarding every deceased unidentified person, regardless of age, found in the applicant's jurisdiction.
- Enter a complete profile of such unidentified persons in compliance with the [guidelines](#) established by the DOJ for the NCIC Missing and Unidentified Persons File, including dental records, DNA records, X-rays, and fingerprints, if available.

ViCAP: Award recipients must:

- Enter all "criteria cases" into ViCAP before the end of the grant period. Recipients should enter all solved and unsolved ViCAP criteria cases, as a solved case could very well link to another agency's unsolved case.
- Conduct searches and analyses within ViCAP to produce leads on cases. Efforts should be expended to continue to utilize the ViCAP database after cases are entered.

- 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 homicide.
- Information entered into ViCAP must be comprehensive. All questions are to be appropriately answered and, when available, additional detail provided. The narrative section should be detailed but succinct. Narrative information can be copied and pasted directly from an agency's incident report.
- ViCAP is for criminal cases only. Upon request, FBI ViCAP staff are available to assist grant recipients with gaining entry to the system, provide training on optimal use of the database, and conduct crime analyses on specific perpetrators/cases. For more information about ViCAP, please refer to: <https://www2.fbi.gov/hq/isd/cirg/ncavc.htm#vicap>.

Budget Information

Generally Allowable Costs

Below is a non-exhaustive list of examples of permissible uses of funds that the applicant may utilize upon receipt of the grant award. However, other uses of funds may be allowable based on the scope of the proposed project.

- **Exhumation of Human Remains (as authorized by law):** If an individual is exhumed and reburied by the funded applicant, then the reburial costs after the exhumation process is an allowable expense. Please note that the exhumation of human remains will require the applicant to undergo the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) review process. See the Potential Environmental Impact section under the Additional Application Components section of the NOFO for more details.
- **Salary (full-time, part-time, overtime) and Benefits for Personnel:** Funds may be used for hiring and maintaining staff directly engaged in performing reporting (e.g., entry to NCIC, NamUs, and, where applicable, ViCAP), investigation, forensic processing and identification (e.g., forensic analysis, to include family reference samples), and family notification related to MP and/or UHR cases. Funds may also be used for additional DNA case analysts and technicians, fingerprint examiners, forensic odontologists, forensic anthropologists, and medical examiners and coroners for those activities directly related to MP and UHR identification programs. Travel: Funds may be used for reasonable travel expenses directly associated with MP and UHR cases in relation to the scope of the proposed project. Examples of allowable travel expenses include UHR and MP case reporting and outreach efforts, location of evidence and records, interviewing and notifying families and collection of family reference samples for submission. Travel funds may also support attendance at allowable training

activities as described under Training (limited funding usage) below. These costs must be in accordance with federal policy or an organizationally approved travel policy. The Office of the Chief Financial Officer reserves the authority to determine the reasonableness of the recipient's own established travel rates. Current federal travel policy and per diem rate information are available at <https://www.gsa.gov/perdiem>.

- **Computer equipment:** Funds may be used to upgrade, replace, lease, or purchase computer hardware or software that will be used exclusively for the reporting, investigation, forensic processing, identification, and record retention for MP and/or UHR cases. This includes equipment, such as document scanners, used for modernizing and digitizing the storage of existing files and records.
- **Supplies:** Funds may be used for supplies related to performing reporting, investigation, forensic processing (e.g., forensic analysis, to include family reference samples), and identification of MP and UHR, and for other supplies directly related to the performance of the proposal's objectives. The proposal must clearly demonstrate that the types and quantity of supplies requested are appropriate for the proposed level of effort.
- **Laboratory supplies and equipment:** Funds may be used to acquire laboratory supplies and equipment for forensic processing of UHR, FRS, and MP cases. The proposal must clearly demonstrate that the types and number of supplies requested are appropriate for the proposed caseload.
- **Transportation of Unidentified Remains and Missing Persons Cases:** Funds may be used for reasonable expenses related to transporting UHR and MP case samples (1) to and from the laboratory (or the entity) conducting the processing or analysis of such cases, and (2) in order to repatriate the human remains. Examples include packing and shipping supplies, and shipping costs. NOTE: Once an individual is repatriated back to appropriate relatives (an allowable expense), funding is not allowed to pay for funeral or burial costs. Please review "OVC Victim Compensation Program" for potential assistance on funeral and/or burial costs.
- **Training (limited funding usage):** Funds may be used for limited training that directly supports personnel in relation to activities that improve the quality and outcomes of the project under the MUHR Program. Training for general purposes and usages by the applicant and its staff, that is not specifically related to the goals, objectives, and deliverables of the MUHR Program, are unallowable. Travel and training costs for continuing education/training opportunities that are associated with professional meetings and conferences (including workshops provided at such meetings and conferences) should not exceed 5% of the total award and should be limited to no more than one training activity per project personnel per year. Additionally, education that is of primary benefit to an individual (e.g., certificate or degree programs) are unallowable.
- **Processing and Identification:** Funds may be used for the processing and identification efforts of UHRs such as DNA testing (to include family reference samples), digital forensics, odontology, anthropology, fingerprint analysis, and other forensic methodologies. See requirements described in the **Notice Regarding [DNA Analyses](#)** above.

- Procurement of services to support forensic processing of MP and UHR cases, to include DNA testing in accredited laboratories
- Support for CODIS lab uploads for MP/UHR/family reference samples.
- **FGG:** See requirements described in the Forensic Genetic Genealogy (FGG) section of the Program Specific Requirements section.
 - Procurement of services to outsource the testing portion of FGG (i.e., DNA extraction, single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) testing, reference sample processing and confirmation sample processing). In the interest of fiscal responsibility, award recipients that propose outsourcing FGG testing are encouraged to choose vendors that limit further outsourcing thereby minimizing third-party fees and preserving the integrity of the evidence.
 - In the interest of fiscal responsibility, BJA highly recommends that the awardee leverage the FBI's resources for the tree-building/investigative portion of FGG (at no cost to the awardee). If the applicant requests funding to outsource the genealogy portion of FGG (i.e., tree building and subsequent steps in the process) they should provide additional justification as to why in-house genealogy or the FBI Investigative Genetic Genealogy (IGG) team is unlikely to meet their jurisdictional needs.
- **State-of-the-Art Multimodal, Multipurpose Forensic and DNA Typing and Analytical Equipment:** Funds may be used for upgrading, replacing, and purchasing equipment, instrumentation, and computer hardware or software for analyses of UHRs and/or reference samples from state or local government MP investigations.
 - All equipment must be dedicated solely to this purpose, or costs must be prorated accordingly.
 - Additional justification will be required for instrumentation and analyses software that requires significant financial investment from BJA.

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

Expenses That Are Not Permitted

In general, the requested items must be in accordance with completion of the specific MUHR project and meeting the goals, objectives, and deliverables of the overall MUHR Program. Below is a non-exhaustive list of common examples of expenses that are not allowable:

- Construction costs
- Funeral and/or Burial Costs (after repatriation process)
- Expert Witness Personnel Costs
- Recipient direct administrative expenses that exceed 3 percent of the total grant amount

- Vehicle purchase and leasing

Budget proposals should include the funding needed to implement the proposed activities. In preparing their budget proposals, applicants should consider what types of costs are allowable, if awarded funding. Costs are allowable when they are reasonable, allocable to, and necessary for the performance of the project funded under the federal award and when they comply with the funding statute and agency requirements, including the conditions of the award and the cost principles set out in [2 C.F.R. Part 200, Subpart E](#) and the [DOJ Grants Financial Guide](#).