

Dear Colleague:

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) is a national leader in the development and implementation of criminal justice policy and sound grant management. The BJA Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2013-2016 reflects the need to be innovative, yet evidenced-based and results-driven. Our work has become especially urgent in these challenging economic times. Longstanding productive partnerships with the field have uniquely positioned BJA to understand and respond to the public safety needs of state, local, and tribal jurisdictions.



BJA's mission is executed with a keen awareness of our responsibility to manage taxpayer dollars wisely and support programs that are backed by strong research and data. This understanding reinforces our dedication to addressing public safety needs and holding ourselves accountable to the highest standards. Guided by the goals and strategies presented below, BJA will continue its work of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the nation's criminal justice agencies.

Early in calendar year 2011, as we embarked upon the development of this Strategic Plan, five major strategic focus areas emerged:

1. Reduction of violent crime, the improvement of community safety, and support for public safety officers.
2. Reduction of recidivism and prevention of unnecessary confinement.
3. Integration of evidence-based, research-driven strategies into the day-to-day operations of BJA and the programs BJA administers and supports.
4. Increasing program effectiveness with a renewed emphasis on data analysis, information sharing, and performance management.
5. Ensuring organizational excellence.

Our strategic plan has one overarching guiding principle statement:

Reduce crime, recidivism, and unnecessary confinement, and promote a safe and fair criminal justice system.

The results of our Strategic Planning process provide us with a roadmap so that any actions directed by this plan relate back to these strategic focus areas. We look forward to facing the challenges of meeting these goals and sharing our success with the many partners that will make it possible. Thank you for taking the time to review this plan and for your commitment to making our nation's communities safer. I look forward to continuing our work together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denise E. O'Donnell".

Denise E. O'Donnell
Director
Bureau of Justice Assistance

November 2012

BJA Strategic Plan

Fiscal Years 2013-2016

Vision and Mission

BJA strengthens the nation's criminal justice system and helps America's state, local, and tribal jurisdictions reduce and prevent crime, reduce recidivism, and promote a fair and safe criminal justice system. BJA focuses its programmatic and policy efforts on providing a wide range of resources, including training and technical assistance (TTA) to law enforcement, courts, corrections, treatment, reentry, justice information sharing, and community-based partners to address chronic and emerging criminal justice challenges nationwide.

BJA's mission is to provide leadership and services in grant administration and criminal justice policy development to support state, local, and tribal justice strategies to achieve safer communities. To accomplish this mission, BJA is organized into four primary components: Programs Office, Policy Office, Planning Office, and the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Office.

The **Programs Office** administers state, local, and tribal grant programs and acts as BJA's direct line of communication to states, local jurisdictions, territories, and tribal governments by providing customer-focused grants management support and careful stewardship over federal funds.

The **Policy Office** provides national leadership to criminal justice organizations and agencies that partner with BJA to identify effective program models for replication and infuse data-driven evidence-based strategies into operational models, practices, and programs. The Policy Office provides policy guidance and TTA to communities and criminal justice partners to meet emerging and chronic criminal justice needs.

The **Planning Office** provides overall BJA-wide planning and coordination, including coordination of communications, budget formulation and execution, contract management, performance measurement, and administrative support.

The **PSOB Office** provides death and education benefits to survivors of fallen law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other first responders, and disability benefits to officers catastrophically injured in the line of duty.

In FY 2012, BJA managed the implementation of more than 27 funding streams for approximately \$1.07 billion. In total, we currently manage over 10,000 active grant awards worth more than \$5.5 billion. With an acute awareness of our responsibility to ensure these dollars are invested in programs and initiatives that will result in safer communities, BJA's programs emphasize enhanced coordination and cooperation of federal, state, local, and tribal efforts.

BJA has a proven track record in facilitating dialogue among researchers, practitioners, and federal, state, local, and tribal criminal justice executives and policymakers. As a result, BJA's investments in programs and TTA are both field-driven and evidence-based.

Training and technical assistance are also ways to ensure that BJA-funded programs are based on research and best practices and implemented with fidelity. When BJA delivers quality TTA with a strategic focus, the assistance provided can have a more powerful long-term impact than direct financial support of programs.

Guiding Principle

BJA's Strategic Plan has one overarching guiding principle: "Reduce crime, recidivism, and unnecessary confinement, and promote a safe and fair criminal justice system." This principle is the compass by which BJA adjusts its course to direct and focus criminal justice resources that will make our communities safer places to live, work, and raise families. BJA will collaborate and access all available resources to support this guiding principle. With multiple competing interests, this guiding principle will enable BJA to maintain a clear focus and remain aware of where it can have its greatest impact.

Goals

The following six goals reflect BJA's commitment to protecting the nation's communities from violence, crime, and drug abuse; providing grant funds and TTA to our nation's criminal justice practitioners; reducing recidivism; and leading efforts to protect and support our nation's public safety officers. They also include internal measures to further improve BJA's processes and empower our workforce to be more effective.

1. BJA will support effective criminal justice policy, programs, information sharing, and collaborations within state, local, and tribal agencies and communities.
2. BJA will promote the use of data, research, and information to increase the effectiveness of criminal justice programs.
3. BJA will enhance its ability to provide Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) and services to survivors of public safety officers killed, and to officers catastrophically injured, in the line of duty.
4. BJA will improve criminal justice outcomes through effective grant management and oversight.
5. BJA will be a high-performing organization where employees are valued and provide excellent customer service.
6. BJA will ensure organizational excellence and accountability.

Each identified goal is linked to specific strategies with accompanying measures. By methodically addressing these critical issues, BJA aims to remain a high-performing organization where accountability for results is paramount and taxpayer dollars are spent effectively.

Goal 1

*BJA will support effective criminal justice policy, programs, information sharing, and collaborations within state, local, and tribal agencies and communities.**

BJA's leadership, services, and funding strengthens America's communities by applying research-based solutions to field-driven priorities. BJA will continue to support state, local, and tribal agencies and communities to enhance their capacity and collaborative efforts to assess, target, and sustain the most critical and effective criminal justice services, including law enforcement, courts, corrections, treatment, reentry, information sharing, capacity building, and prevention initiatives that strengthen the nation's criminal justice system.

The following strategies will be used to assist BJA achieve this goal:

- **Ensure BJA program models are effective.** Well-intentioned programs fall short of their stated objectives if not founded on evidence-based models or if they lack accurate and timely data or program assessment. BJA is committed to the success of the programs it funds. BJA will assess the fidelity of operations and effectiveness of program models through the BJA Performance Measurement Tool, site monitoring visits, and reports from TTA providers.
- **Provide high-quality and relevant training and technical assistance to the field.** TTA will continue to be a core service provided by BJA. Under this plan, TTA proposed and delivered will directly relate back to BJA's principles and mission. TTA will be based on research and promising programs, policies, practices, and methodologies that have proven to have an impact; coordinated so it is more accessible to all; and evaluated by the field to ensure it meets their needs.
- **Promote the use of risk and needs assessment throughout the criminal justice system.** Use of validated risk and needs assessments is the foundation for implementing evidenced-based practices. To effectively manage limited criminal justice resources, communities will be encouraged to apply risk and needs assessments at all phases of the criminal justice system. This enables informed criminal justice decisions regarding offender placement and the targeting of scarce resources for the highest-risk offenders while preventing over-programming of low-risk offenders which can result in increased recidivism.
- **Create practical tools that communicate criminal justice solutions to the field.** BJA helps promotes a safe and fair criminal justice system by scanning state, local, and tribal efforts; identifying successes and challenges; keeping abreast of the latest criminal justice research; and efficiently disseminating that information to the field. For example, BJA-supported tools include a Global Information Sharing Toolkit, a Cost-Benefit Knowledge Bank, an Officer Safety Toolkit, a "What Works in Reentry" web site, an Evidenced-Based Policing Matrix, and a "Research into Practice" web site for drug treatment courts. BJA will focus on developing these types of practical tools and resources to communicate research and effective programs and strategies to criminal justice practitioners.
- **Respond to emerging public safety needs.** This strategy ensures that BJA will continue to listen to the field, be present during critical discussions, and work to identify significant and emerging public safety needs. Based on our constant scanning of the field, BJA seeks to quickly deploy resources to assist state, local, and tribal entities address critical needs and emerging public safety threats.

* BJA Strategic Goal 1 aligns with **DOJ 2012-2016 Strategic Plan:** Goal 2 *Prevent Crime, Protect the Rights of the American People, & Enforce Federal Law*; Goal 3 *Ensure & Support the Fair, Impartial, Efficient, and Transparent Administration of Justice at the Federal, State, Local, Tribal, and International Level*; and **OJP 2007-2012 Strategic Plan:** Goal 1 *Increase the Nation's Capacity to Prevent & Control Crime*; Goal 2 *Improve the Fair Administration of Justice*; Goal 4 *Increase the Understanding of Justice Issues & Develop Successful Interventions*.

Goal 2

*BJA will promote the use of data, research, and information to increase the effectiveness of criminal justice programs.**

America's criminal justice system is experiencing a decrease in available resources, reducing the capacity of state, local, and tribal criminal justice agencies to identify and implement programs to improve offender outcomes, realize justice system efficiencies, and facilitate safer communities. BJA will address these challenges by encouraging innovation, supporting more efficient approaches, and supporting research-based programs and best practices that produce measurable results. BJA will also encourage partnerships and collaborations across all levels of government, private profit and nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and the advocacy community in policy development, grant solicitations, grant programs, and TTA efforts.

BJA recognizes the importance of integrating research, evidence, and data into the program and policy development process to ensure development of strategies and initiatives that are innovative, promising, and effective. BJA will expand support for research-practitioner partnerships which have produced promising results in programs such as Smart Policing and Project Safe Neighborhoods and focus on ways to strengthen and support such partnerships. BJA will also continue to encourage national centers of excellence such as those that currently support reentry, drug courts, and the Prison Rape Elimination Act as one-stop resources for training, technical assistance research, and information sharing. BJA will expand the use of data reported through its performance management system to assess whether programs are meeting intended goals and objectives. Through its GrantStat initiative, BJA will assess program design and implementation strategies, identify TTA needs, monitor priorities, and refine program models in future solicitations.

This goal will be reached through the following strategies:

- **Help criminal justice agencies to access, share, and use data in decisionmaking.** Fighting crime and creating safer communities is enhanced by data-driven, research-based criminal justice models. Those models rely on high-quality data with multiple sources. "Hot spot" analysis and offender-based policies and risk and needs assessments all rely on timely and accurate data. BJA will convene public safety technology leaders and direct resources to advance information sharing across the criminal justice spectrum. BJA will develop relevant and targeted reports, fact sheets, and other publications for the field on crime trends and methods, confinement rates, and recidivism.
- **Serve as a facilitator for practitioners, policymakers, and academics to share knowledge and promote innovation.** BJA is in a unique position to not only facilitate sharing knowledge with and promoting innovation to the field, but also to encourage the peer-to-peer sharing of information. BJA will seek to utilize the most advanced distance learning and virtual meeting tools to further promote this important learning process.
- **Promote and share evidence-based and promising practices and programs.** BJA will serve as a clearinghouse for the most promising data-driven, evidence-based practices that help state, local, and tribal agencies make efficient use of limited resources.
- **Include information on effective program models, current trends, and relevant research in grant solicitations.** Grant solicitations are often potential applicants' first exposure to the newest efforts in data-driven, evidence-based criminal justice models. By incorporating research and more timely information in our solicitations, BJA will disseminate this important information to a wider audience and encourage use of this information earlier in the grant award process.

* BJA Strategic Goal 2 aligns with **DOJ 2012-2016 Strategic Plan:** Goal 2 *Prevent Crime, Protect the Rights of the American People, & Enforce Federal Law*; Goal 3 *Ensure & Support the Fair, Impartial, Efficient, and Transparent Administration of Justice at the Federal, State, Local, Tribal, and International Level*; and **OJP 2007-2012 Strategic Plan:** Goal 1 *Increase the Nation's Capacity to Prevent & Control Crime*; Goal 2 *Improve the Fair Administration of Justice*; Goal 4 *Increase the Understanding of Justice Issues & Develop Successful Interventions*.

Goal 3

*BJA will enhance its ability to provide Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) and services to survivors of public safety officers killed, and to officers catastrophically injured, in the line of duty.**

Throughout the country, public safety officers watch over neighborhoods and work to make communities safer. BJA respects these officers' devotion and willingness to place themselves in danger to protect our nation's communities.

The PSOB Office assists public safety officers, their agencies, and their families before, during, and after a tragedy occurs. The office administers death and education benefits to survivors of fallen law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other first responders, as well as disability benefits to officers catastrophically injured in the line of duty. This program offers peace of mind to public safety officers and their families and sends a strong message that this nation values those who risk their lives to serve their communities. BJA is honored to administer the PSOB Program.

PSOB remains one of BJA's most effective programs, and the PSOB Office will continually work to improve its services. The three areas of focus are improved timeliness for claims processing, greater outreach, and enhanced partnerships and communication with stakeholders.

This goal will be reached through the following strategies:

- **Provide efficient, timely, and survivor-centered benefits services to PSOB claimants.** The primary goal of PSOB is responsiveness to the needs of survivors and injured officers, and they are committed to greater efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness. To achieve that goal, BJA is transitioning PSOB to a completely electronic system and building technology for claimants to follow the progress of their claims. BJA will set goals and measure progress through metrics posted on the PSOB web site that report: 1) the average number of days required to process PSOB claims, and 2) the percentage of PSOB claims determined within 1 year of submission.
- **Raise awareness of PSOB's death, disability, and educational assistance programs.** The program cannot reach full effectiveness until every public safety officer and agency in every jurisdiction of this nation is aware of the benefits offered by PSOB. BJA will increase its outreach efforts and measure the effectiveness through tracking the number of public safety agencies contacted through PSOB outreach efforts.
- **Establish an advisory group with PSOB stakeholders, including survivors, to guide PSOB activities.** PSOB has worked to build strong relationships with its stakeholders and will formalize those relationships by establishing a PSOB advisory group with a formal meeting schedule to receive feedback from stakeholders and help ensure the continued success of the program.

* BJA Strategic Goal 3 aligns with **DOJ 2012-2016 Strategic Plan:** Goal 2 *Prevent Crime, Protect the Rights of the American People, & Enforce Federal Law*; Goal 3 *Ensure & Support the Fair, Impartial, Efficient, and Transparent Administration of Justice at the Federal, State, Local, Tribal, and International Level*; and **OJP 2007-2012 Strategic Plan:** Goal 3 *Reduce the Impact of Crime on Victims and Hold Offenders Accountable*.

Goal 4

*BJA will improve criminal justice outcomes through effective grant management and oversight.**

BJA provided more than \$1 billion in criminal justice funding in FY 2012. However, BJA does much more than award grants. BJA identifies needs in the field; educates prospective grantees about grant opportunities; assists states in strategic planning; monitors compliance; provides training, workshops, webinars, and an online Grant Writing and Management Academy; and provides oversight and prevention of waste, fraud, and abuse.

BJA will remain committed to this goal and to increasing our ability to meet the expectations of our partners about grants management and oversight, including timely and quality peer reviews and grant monitoring.

This goal will be reached through the following strategies:

- **Improve the peer review process to ensure that the highest-quality applications are funded.** As the gateway to BJA funding, the independent peer review process has proven to be an effective means to fund the most worthwhile projects. BJA will build upon this success by further emphasizing peer reviewer qualifications and post-review evaluations. BJA will also institute mandatory training for peer reviewers that must be completed annually in order to be eligible for participation in this process.
- **Maximize the use of information reported in BJA's Performance Measurement Tool (PMT) and Training and Technical Assistance Reporting System (TTARS) to monitor grantee performance.** PMT and TTARS capture performance data so that BJA can quickly identify successful efforts and respond to those facing challenges. To further increase the usefulness of these systems, BJA will enhance its ability to collect and timely analyze performance data and develop systems to improve the quality of data submitted through PMT and TTARS.
- **Maintain a formal process for reviewing grant program performance (GrantStat).** Through GrantStat, BJA tracks the performance of grant-funded programs by collection and analysis of grant management and performance data and input from TTA providers. BJA is committed to using the GrantStat process to identify strengths and successes in grant programs and to improve program outcomes by providing TTA to grantees facing implementation challenges or falling short of meeting program goals. BJA will continue to use knowledge gained through GrantStat to make improvements in future grant solicitations.
- **Provide high-quality grants management services.** BJA will continue to meet its core function of providing careful stewardship over federal grant dollars, while maintaining a customer-service focus on the needs and challenges of BJA grantees. BJA will measure these efforts through monthly performance metrics which measure critical grant management functions; i.e., the timeliness of processing grant adjustment notices, progress reports, and close-outs and through a grantee satisfaction survey focused on BJA's grant management services.

* BJA Strategic Goal 4 aligns with **DOJ 2012-2016 Strategic Plan:** Goal 2 *Prevent Crime, Protect the Rights of the American People, & Enforce Federal Law*; Goal 3 *Ensure & Support the Fair, Impartial, Efficient, and Transparent Administration of Justice at the Federal, State, Local, Tribal, and International Level*; and **OJP 2007-2012 Strategic Plan:** Goal 1 *Increase the Nation's Capacity to Prevent & Control Crime*; Goal 2 *Improve the Fair Administration of Justice*; Goal 4 *Increase the Understanding of Justice Issues & Develop Successful Interventions*.

Goal 5

*BJA will be a high-performing organization where employees are valued and provide excellent customer service.**

To remain a high-performing organization that is able to meet criminal justice challenges in the field, BJA must continue to nurture an environment where teamwork, partnerships, and quality of work are valued; creative strategies are encouraged; and BJA employees can grow and develop. BJA is committed to facing the challenges of increasing workload demands to increase effectiveness and flexibility. BJA will increase staff development opportunities in areas of skill development, collaboration, and problem solving; improve the ability to attain increased efficiencies and meet deadlines; and increase the quality of customer service. BJA will also leverage technology such as telework, videoconferencing, and other technologies to improve productivity.

This goal will be reached through the following strategies:

- **Provide opportunities for professional development to promote workforce excellence.** Professional development serves the dual purpose of improving BJA's customer service and increasing job satisfaction among employees. BJA will seek to increase the participation by BJA staff in events that provide personal and professional development, increase the number of BJA staff participating in job-related training, and increase the percentage of BJA staff who report a positive work environment.
- **Recognize individual and group achievements.** To better reward teamwork and individual excellence, BJA will become more proactive about recognizing teams and individuals who have gone beyond the call of duty or made a large or unique contribution to the work of BJA or its customers.
- **Promote the use of telework.** Telework often relieves the stress of commuting and encourages a healthier work/life balance for BJA employees. Mindful of the OJP Collective Bargaining Agreement, BJA will seek to ensure all employees who are interested and eligible to telecommute are afforded the opportunity to do so. BJA will continue to promote the use of technology such as videoconferencing and mobile video cameras to facilitate participation in meetings from remote locations.

* BJA Strategic Goal 5 aligns with **DOJ 2012-2016 Strategic Plan: Managing the DOJ Mission** (pp. 46-48); and **OJP 2007-2012 Strategic Plan: Supporting the Mission** (Chapter 3).

Goal 6

*BJA will ensure organizational excellence and accountability.**

In the same way that BJA institutes data-gathering systems to improve the performance of funded programs and projects, BJA will use data to improve our internal processes. Through these efforts, BJA will enhance program results; prevent waste, fraud, and abuse; and improve cost effectiveness.

BJA is committed to collecting meaningful data to improve performance. BJA ensure that all data elements required to be reported are necessary to measure effectiveness and ensure accountability; identify inefficient or duplicative programs; and target technical assistance, training, and grant funding. Further, BJA will provide feedback to grantees and publicize program results so that both grantees and the criminal justice community can assess program effectiveness. This goal will be reached through the following strategies:

- **Create a tracking system to archive BJA’s responses to information requests to promote consistency and avoid duplication.** BJA will reinforce its commitment to improving performance by instituting an internal system to ensure that our responses to grantees and other stakeholders are thorough and efficient.
- **Leverage the use of technology to manage work and enhance communication among BJA staff.** The introduction of new technology can be confusing and frustrating, but with proper training and guidance, well-executed technology improves performance and saves taxpayers’ dollars. BJA will standardize the use of collaboration sites to enhance communication among BJA staff and with the field.
- **Expand documentation of BJA’s policies and procedures to increase efficiency.** Robust and easily accessible policies and procedures benefit BJA in two ways: they provide a direct link between our strategic plan and our daily operations, and they ensure that essential organizational knowledge is shared and not dependent on any one employee’s experience. BJA will continue to develop and update policies and procedures and will disseminate those documents.
- **Increase cost savings and efficiency.** Through innovations BJA is developing or already implementing, BJA has seen increased efficiency and reduced costs in areas such as travel, printing, and peer review. BJA is committed to seeking out systems and processes that make us even better stewards of the taxpayers’ dollars and increases their trust in our mission. BJA will implement new initiatives to reduce costs and enhance operational efficiency.

* BJA Strategic Goal 6 aligns with **DOJ 2012-2016 Strategic Plan: Managing the DOJ Mission** (pp. 46-48); and **OJP 2007-2012 Strategic Plan: Supporting the Mission** (Chapter 3).