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Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Assistance



BJA FY 21 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program- Competitive

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Overview

The [U.S. Department of Justice](#) (DOJ), [Office of Justice Programs](#) (OJP), [Bureau of Justice Assistance](#) (BJA) is seeking applications for competitive funding under the FY 2021 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program. This program furthers the Department's mission by providing states and units of local government with tools needed to meet the challenges of crime and justice. 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.

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

Solicitation Categories

This solicitation does not include Solicitation Categories.

Eligible Applicants:

County governments, State governments, City or township governments

Other

See Eligibility Section

BJA will consider applications under which two or more entities would carry out the federal award; however, only one entity may be the applicant. Any others must be proposed as subrecipients (subgrantees). For additional information on subawards, see the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#).

Contact Information

For technical assistance with submitting the **SF-424 and SF- LLL** in Grants.gov, contact the Grants.gov Customer Support Hotline at 800-518-4726, 606-545-5035, at [Grants.gov customer support webpage](#), or email at support@grants.gov. The Grants.gov Support Hotline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, except on federal holidays

For technical assistance with submitting the **full application** in DOJ's Justice Grants System (JustGrants), contact the JustGrants Service Desk at 833-872-5175 or JustGrants.Support@usdoj.gov. The JustGrants Service Desk operates 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. eastern time, Monday-Friday, and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Sunday, and federal holidays.

An applicant that experiences unforeseen Grants.gov or JustGrants technical issues beyond its control that prevent it from submitting its application by the deadline must email the National Criminal Justice Reference Service Response Center (Response Center) at grants@ncjrs.gov **within 24 hours after the application deadline** to request approval to submit its application after the deadline.

For assistance with any other requirements of this solicitation, contact the Response Center by telephone at 800-851-3420 or TTY: 301-240-6310 (hearing impaired only) or by email at grants@ncjrs.gov. Response Center hours of operation are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. eastern time Monday through Friday, and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. eastern time on the solicitation close date.

Submission Information

In FY 2021, applications will be submitted to DOJ in a **NEW** two-step process.

Step 1: Applicants will submit an **SF-424 and an SF-LLL** in Grants.gov at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>. To register in Grants.gov, applicants will need to obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) and System for Award Management (SAM) registration or renewal.

Step 2: Applicants will submit the **full application** including attachments in JustGrants at JustGrants.usdoj.gov.

To be considered timely, the full application must be submitted in JustGrants by the JustGrants application deadline.

OJP encourages applicants to review, the "How to Apply" section in the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#).

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Program Description

Overview

The Department of Justice is committed to advancing work that promotes civil rights, increases access to justice, supports crime victims, protects the public from crime and evolving threats, and builds trust between law enforcement and the community.

With this solicitation, BJA seeks proposals for competitive funding under the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program (the Coverdell Program), which awards grants to states and units of local government to help improve forensic science and medical examiner/coroner services. Under the Coverdell Program, State Administering Agencies (SAAs) may apply for both formula and competitive funds. Units of local government may apply for competitive funds. This solicitation is **ONLY** for the competitive funds. An applicant that seeks 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 under BJA's FY 2021 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program (Formula) solicitation.

Statutory Authority

The Coverdell Program is authorized by Title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, Part BB, codified at 34 U.S.C. §§ 10561-10566 (the Coverdell law).

Specific Information

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.

Goals, Objectives, Deliverables, and Timeline

Goals

The result of Coverdell grants to applicant states should be a demonstrated 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 result of Coverdell grants directly to units of local government should be a demonstrated 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 purposes:

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. A backlog in the analysis of forensic science evidence exists if forensic evidence has been stored in a laboratory, medical examiner's office, coroner's office, law enforcement storage facility, or medical facility and has not been subjected to all appropriate forensic testing because of a lack of resources or personnel.
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.

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 57 percent of available funds to specifically target the challenges that opioids and synthetic drugs have brought to the forensic science community.

Deliverables

All Coverdell grantees are required to report specific programmatic metrics (see the Performance Measures under “Content of Application Submission”). 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 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 the Performance Measures for additional required grantee reporting on FGGS activities.

The Goals, Objectives, and Deliverables are directly related to the performance measures that demonstrate the results of the work completed, as discussed under the Application and Submission Information section.

Evidence-Based Programs or Practices

OJP strongly emphasizes the use of data and evidence in policymaking and program development in criminal justice, juvenile justice, and crime victim services. For additional information and resources on evidence-based programs or practices, see the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#).

Information Regarding Potential Evaluation of Programs and Activities

OJP may conduct or support an evaluation of the programs and activities funded under this solicitation. For additional information, see the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) section entitled “Information Regarding Potential Evaluation of Programs and Activities.”

OJP Priority Areas

The Department of Justice is committed to advancing work that promotes civil rights, increases access to justice, supports crime victims, protects the public from crime and evolving threats, and builds trust between law enforcement and the community. In FY 2021, OJP will give priority consideration in award decisions to applications that demonstrate ways in which their projects will advance one or more of these areas.

To receive priority consideration for advancing one or more of the Department’s priorities, the applicant must provide a sufficient narrative explanation as an attachment, that specifies how the project will advance the promotion of civil rights, access to justice, support to crime victims, protecting the public from crime and evolving threats, or building trust between law enforcement and the community.

In addition, OJP will give priority consideration, if applicable, to applicants that demonstrate that the individuals who are intended to benefit from the requested grant reside in high-poverty areas or persistent-poverty counties.

To receive priority consideration under the poverty priority, the applicant must provide information to demonstrate that the individuals who are intended to benefit from the requested grant reside in high-poverty areas or persistent-poverty counties. For purposes of this priority consideration, the term “high-poverty area” means any census tract with a poverty rate of at least 20 percent as measured by the 2013–2017 5-year data series available from the American Community Survey of the Census Bureau (applicants may search by census tract at <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/narrative-profiles/2017/>) and the term “persistent-poverty counties” means any county that has had 20 percent or more of its population living in poverty over the past 30 years, as measured by the 1990 and 2000 decennial censuses and the most recent Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (applicants may search by county at <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/dec/census-poverty.html> and at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/saipe.html>).

Priority consideration is one of many factors that OJP considers in making funding decisions and is not a guarantee of an award.

Federal Award Information

Awards, Amounts and Durations

Anticipated Number of Awards

30

Anticipated Maximum Dollar Amount of Awards

\$250,000.00

Period of Performance Start Date

10/1/21 12:00 AM

Period of Performance Duration (Months)

24

Anticipated Total Amount to be Awarded Under Solicitation

\$4,454,484.00

Additional Information

*The figures and calculations reflected in this solicitation are based on an estimated total amount available of \$4,454,484, 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.

Availability of Funds

Availability of Funds

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

Competitive Funds for States and Units of Local Government

Fifteen percent 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 2017, 2018, and 2019, existing resources, and current needs of the potential grant recipient will be considerations in award decisions. For FY 2021, the maximum amount a state or unit of local government may receive in competitive funds is **\$250,000**. 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 science improvements **above and beyond** those it can accomplish with its estimated amount of formula funds.

Types of Awards

BJA expects to make awards under this solicitation as grants. See the "Administrative, National Policy, and Other Legal Requirements" section of the [OJP Grant 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 (and cooperative agreements).

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. The "Part 200 Uniform Requirements" means the DOJ regulation at 2 C.F.R. Part 2800, which adopts (with certain modifications) the provisions of 2 C.F.R. Part 200. See [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

Budget Information

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 opioid- and synthetic drug-related challenges; however, applications requesting Coverdell funds for projects that address specified opioid- and/or 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.

Permissible Expenses

The types of expenses listed below generally may be paid with Coverdell funds. Federal funds must be used to supplement existing state and local funds for program activities and must not supplant those 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 also may be used for application and maintenance fees charged by 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[.]”

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 2021 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 2021 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 relating to facilities, provided the expenses are directly attributable to improving forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services. Funds also may 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.

Grants that exceed 0.6 percent of the total available funds. If an applicant state receives total grants that exceed 0.6 percent of the total available funds (estimated here at \$178,179), 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 \$142,543) plus 40 percent of the amount of the grant in excess of 0.6 percent of the total available funds.

For example, if \$29,696,563 were to become available for Coverdell awards in FY 2021 and a state were to receive a total Coverdell grant of \$296,966, no more than \$190,058 may be used for the costs of any new facility.

A sample calculation for a \$296,966 grant would be as follows:

Eighty percent of 0.6 percent of the total available funds: $\$178,179 \times .80 = \$142,543$.

Amount in excess of \$296,966: $\$296,966 - \$178,179 = \$118,787$.

Forty percent of amount in excess of \$296,966: $\$118,787 \times .40 = \$47,515$.

Sum of $\$142,543 + \$47,515 = \$190,058$.

Estimates and calculations are based on the assumption that the total available funds for ALL Coverdell awards (formula and competitive) in FY 2021 will be \$29,696,563.

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

Expenses That Are Not Permitted

- **Funds to conduct research.** Applicants may address emerging forensic science issues and technology through implementation of new technologies and processes in public laboratories.
- **Expenses other than those listed above** (including expenses for general law enforcement functions or non-forensic investigatory functions).
- **Costs for any new facility** that exceed the limits described above.
- **Recipient administrative expenses** (direct or indirect) that exceed 10 percent of the total grant amount.
- The **use of funds for the purchase and/or lease of vehicles** such as crime scene vans.

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

This solicitation does not require a match.

Pre-agreement Costs (also known as Pre-award Costs)

See the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) information on Pre-agreement Costs (also known as Pre-award Costs).

Limitation on Use of Award Funds for Employee Compensation: Waiver

See the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) information on Limitation on Use of Award Funds for Employee Compensation; Waiver.

Prior Approval, Planning, and Reporting of Conference/Meeting/Training Costs

See the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for information on Prior Approval, Planning, and Reporting of Conference/Meeting/Training Costs.

Costs Associated with Language Assistance (if applicable)

See the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for information on Costs Associated with Language Assistance.

Eligibility Information

- State governments
- City or township governments
- County governments

For purposes of this solicitation, the term “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. Funding is to be used for forensic science laboratories (see below for additional information). State Administering Agencies (SAAs) apply on behalf of states, including any state government entity. For information on eligibility, see the Eligibility Information section.

For purposes of this solicitation—

- A state/local government entity performing forensic science services is considered a “forensic science laboratory” if it employs one or more full-time scientists:
 - With a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in a natural or formal science (e.g., chemistry, physics, biology, computer science, or a closely related field).
 - Whose principal function is to examine, analyze, and interpret physical and/or digital evidence in criminal matters and provide reports and testimony to courts of law regarding such evidence.
- Law enforcement units operating outside of the crime laboratory function, such as crime scene units and other entities that engage exclusively in evidence collection and documentation, are not forensic science laboratories for these purposes.
- Medical examiner and coroner offices are treated as forensic science laboratories.

To advance Executive Order 13929 Safe Policing for Safe Communities, as of October 28, 2020, the Attorney General determined that all state, local, and university or college law enforcement agencies must be certified by an approved independent credentialing body or have started the certification process to be allocated FY 2021 DOJ discretionary grant funding, as either a recipient or a subrecipient. For detailed information on this new certification requirement, please visit <https://cops.usdoj.gov/SafePolicingEO>.

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

BJA will consider applications under which two or more entities would carry out the federal award; however, only one entity may be the applicant. Any others must be proposed as subrecipients (subgrantees). For additional information on subawards, see the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#).

States and units of local government may apply for FY 2021 competitive Coverdell funds to use for forensic science laboratories, as defined in the eligibility section on the solicitation cover page. For purposes of the Coverdell Program, the term "state" means each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. For certain purposes, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands are treated as one state.

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

Note: A prospective recipient of grant funds that is found to have an "unresolved audit finding" from a DOJ Office of the Inspector General audit, as described at 34 U.S.C. § 10263, will be ineligible to receive grant funds during the period specified in that statute. See 34 U.S.C. § 10263(2).

The Coverdell law (at 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](#).** 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 2021 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program.

Applicants requesting funds for only medical examiner's 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 the Federal Award Information section of this solicitation.) Applicants must also specifically describe any new facility to be constructed as well as document the estimated costs of the facility.

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](#).** 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.”

Applicants are expected to carefully review the requirements of each certification before determining whether the certification properly may be 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 | Funding | 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 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](#).

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 “What an Application Should Include,” 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 program 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 Serious 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:

- 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.
- Office of Justice Programs grants, including certifications provided in connection with such grants, are subject to review by the Office of Justice Programs and/or by the Department of Justice'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 properly may be 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 properly may be 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:

- 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 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.

- 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/coroners' 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 IG's authority in this regard is not circumscribed in such a way that the IG's ability to conduct independent investigations is limited (for example, through a reporting hierarchy that does not provide for the IG to report directly to the chief executive officer or another equally independent state official or office).

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.)

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

Application and Submission Information

The following application elements **MUST** be included in the application submission for an application to meet the basic minimum requirements (BMR) to advance to peer review and receive consideration for funding:

- Proposal Abstract,
- Proposal Narrative,
- Budget Worksheet and Budget Narrative (web-based form), and
- **All five** certifications required by the Coverdell law. Medical examiner and coroner offices are exempt from submitting the certification regarding accreditation.

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

Information to Complete the Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)

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

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

Intergovernmental Review: This solicitation (“funding opportunity”) is subject to [Executive Order 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/2020/04/SPOC-4-13-20.pdf>. If the applicant’s state appears on the SPOC list, the applicant must contact the State SPOC to find out about, and comply with, the state’s process under E.O. 12372. In completing 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 the response that the “Program is subject to E.O. 12372 but has not been selected by the state for review.”)

Standard Applicant Information (JustGrants 424 and General Agency Information)

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

Proposal Abstract

A proposal abstract (no more than 400 words) summarizing the proposed project, including primary activities, products and deliverables, the service area, and who will benefit from the proposed project, will be completed in the JustGrants web-based form. Proposal abstracts should:

- Be written for a general public audience.
- Identify the partner(s) involved in the project, if any.
- Provide an outline limited to the scope of the FY 2021 Coverdell Program.

Proposal Narrative

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 for costs of a new facility, the proposal narrative must specifically describe the new facility to be constructed and the estimated costs of that facility.

Accreditation

If grant funds are requested for accreditation, the proposal narrative must describe accreditation activities and plans and, as applicable, the projected schedule for preparation for 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 the eligibility discussion on the solicitation cover page for the definition of “forensic science laboratory.”

- **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 [State Administering Agencies | Overview | Office of Justice Programs \(ojp.gov\)](#)). 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).

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

The following sections must be included as part of the proposal narrative:

- a. Description of the Issue/Statement of the Problem
- b. Project Design and Implementation
- c. Capabilities and Competencies
- d. Plan for Collecting the Data Required for this Solicitation’s Performance Measures

The application should demonstrate the anticipated impact of eligible project activities on improvement of forensic science or medical examiner/coroner services, including as to the quality and/or timeliness of forensic results.

Note: Applicants are **not** required to submit performance data with the application. Rather, performance measures information is included as an alert that successful applicants will be required to submit performance data as part of the reporting requirements under an award.

OJP will require each successful applicant to submit regular performance data that demonstrate the results of the work carried out under the award. The performance data directly relate to the goals, objectives, and deliverables identified under “Goals, Objectives, and Deliverables.”

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

Award recipients will be required to submit performance measure data and performance reports in JustGrants. Examples of the performance measures questionnaire can be found at <https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/media/document/Coverdell-Measures.pdf>. Further guidance on the post-award submission process will be provided, if selected for award.

Note on Project Evaluations

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

Goals, Objectives, Deliverables, and Timeline

Applicants will submit the program's goals, objectives, deliverables, and timelines in the JustGrants web-based form.

Budget and Associated Documentation

Budget Worksheet and Budget Narrative (Web-based Form)

Applicants will complete the JustGrants web-based budget form. See the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)

Applicants will submit their indirect cost rate agreement by uploading the agreement as an attachment in JustGrants. See the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

Financial Management Questionnaire (including applicant disclosure of high-risk status)

Applicants will download the questionnaire in JustGrants and submit by uploading the completed questionnaire as an attachment in JustGrants. See the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

Disclosure of Process Related to Executive Compensation

If applicable, applicants will submit a description of the process used to determine compensation by uploading the document as an attachment in JustGrants. See the "Application Attachments" section of the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for information.

Accreditation

The Budget Worksheet (which includes a "Narrative" section the applicant is to populate for each budget category) should clearly identify the cost for any proposed accreditation activities within the appropriate cost category (e.g., personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, and [procurement] contracts) of the budget documents.

Opioid and Synthetic Drug Crisis

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."

Additional Application Components

Applicants will attach the additional requested documentation in JustGrants.

Curriculum Vitae or Resumes

Curriculum vitae or résumés for all laboratory scientists who will be significantly involved in substantive aspects of the proposed project (including, for example, scientists who will be operating proposed new equipment). Such documentation should also confirm the eligibility of the applicant entity by showing at least one such scientist is employed who possesses at least a bachelor's degree in a natural or formal science.

Position Description of at least One Scientist

As described in the eligibility section on the solicitation cover page, to be considered a "forensic science laboratory" for the

purposes of this solicitation, an entity must employ one or more full-time scientists, with a minimum of a bachelor's degree in a natural or formal science (e.g., chemistry, physics, biology, computer science, or a closely related field) and whose principal function is to examine, analyze, and interpret physical and/or digital evidence in criminal matters and provide reports and testimony to courts of law regarding such evidence. A position description must be included for at least one such scientist to confirm eligibility of the applicant entity.

Documentation of Advancing DOJ Priorities (if applicable)

As is mentioned above, OJP will give priority consideration in award decisions to applications that specify how the project will advance one or more of the following DOJ priorities: the promotion of civil rights, access to justice, support to crime victims, protecting the public from crime and evolving threats, or building trust between law enforcement and the community. Applicants will submit the narrative by uploading the document as an attachment in JustGrants.

Documentation of High-Poverty Areas or Persistent-Poverty Counties (if applicable)

As mentioned above, OJP will give priority consideration in award decisions to applications that demonstrate that the individuals who will benefit from the requested grant reside in high-poverty areas or persistent-poverty counties as defined above. Each applicant proposing to receive consideration under the High-Poverty Areas or Persistent-Poverty Counties priority must provide a sufficient narrative explanation to identify each specific High-Poverty Area (by census tract number (s)) and/or each specific Persistent-Poverty County where individuals are intended to benefit from the requested grant and how the requested grant will address specific challenges in each such identified area and/or county. Applicants will submit the narrative by uploading the document as an attachment in JustGrants.

Coverdell Statutory Certifications

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](#) — Application from a State 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](#)
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](#)

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 certification.

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 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 a separate file with an appropriately descriptive file name.

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 2021 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.

Disclosures and Assurances

Applicants will complete the following disclosures and assurances.

Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

Applicants will complete and submit the SF-LLL in Grants.gov. See the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

DOJ Certified Standard Assurances

See the DOJ Certified Standard Assurances in the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#).

Applicant Disclosure of Duplication in Cost Items

Applicants will complete the JustGrants web-based Applicant Disclosure of Duplication in Cost Items form. See the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information.

DOJ Certifications Regarding Lobbying; Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; and Drug-Free Workplace Requirements

Applicants will review and accept the DOJ Certified Certifications Regarding Lobbying; Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; and Drug-Free Workplace Requirements. See [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#).

Applicant Disclosure and Justification – DOJ High Risk Grantees (if applicable)

If applicable, applicants will submit as an attachment in JustGrants. See the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for additional information. A DOJ High Risk Grantee is a recipient that has received a DOJ High Risk designation based on a documented history of unsatisfactory performance, financial instability, management system or other internal control deficiencies, or noncompliance with award terms and conditions on prior awards, or that is otherwise not responsible.

How to Apply

Applicants will submit an **SF-424** and an **SF-LLL** in Grants.gov at <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>.

Applicants will submit the **full application** including attachments in JustGrants at [JustGrants.usdoj.gov](https://www.justgrants.usdoj.gov).

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

Submission Dates and Time

The **SF-424** and the **SF-LLL** will be submitted in Grants.gov by June 24, 2021 at 11:59 pm. OJP urges applicants to submit applications at least 72 hours prior to the application due date to allow time for the applicant to receive validation messages or rejection notifications from Grants.gov and to correct in a timely fashion any problems that may have caused a rejection notification.

The **full application** will be submitted in JustGrants on July 8, 2021 at 11:59 pm.

To be considered timely, the full application must be submitted in JustGrants by the JustGrants application deadline.

Application Review Information

Review Criteria

a. Merit Review Criteria

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

- Description of the Issue/Statement of the Problem (25%) - evaluate the applicant's understanding of the program/issue to be addressed.

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 2017, 2018, and 2019 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 reported data.

- Project Design and Implementation (40%) - evaluate the adequacy of the proposal, including the goals, objectives, timelines, milestones, and deliverables.

Describe the strategy to address the needs identified in the Description of the Issue/Statement of the Problem, particularly any areas of specific concern and the relevance to the goals and objectives of the program.

Discuss how funding under this initiative will help to improve the quality and/or timeliness of services.

Demonstrate the soundness of the approach to improve forensic services.

Discuss the feasibility of the proposed project, including likelihood of completion within the proposed period of performance.

Demonstrate awareness of potential pitfalls and proposed mitigation strategies should pitfalls be encountered.

If applicable:

- Discuss the soundness of the approach to reduce and/or eliminate a backlog.
- Describe the soundness of the approach to train and employ forensic personnel and medicolegal death investigators to eliminate a backlog and increase capacity.
- Demonstrate innovation and creativity in the approach to reducing and/or eliminating a backlog and increasing capacity.

- Capabilities and Competencies (15%) - evaluate administrative and technical capacity of the applicant to successfully accomplish the goals and objectives.

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.

Describe the demonstrated ability of the proposed staff to manage the effort.

- 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

b. Other Review Criteria/Factors

Other important considerations for BJA include geographic diversity, strategic priorities (specifically including, but not limited to, those mentioned above relating to priority areas), available funding, past performance, and the extent to which the Budget Worksheet and Budget Narrative (Web-based form) accurately explain project costs that are reasonable, necessary, and otherwise allowable under federal law and applicable federal cost principles.

Review Process

Applications submitted under this solicitation that meet 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 stated review criteria above.

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

- The application must be submitted by an eligible type of applicant.
- The application must request funding within programmatic funding constraints (if applicable).
- The application must be responsive to the scope of the solicitation.
- The application must include all items necessary to meet the basic minimum requirements.

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

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

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

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 take into account not only peer review ratings and BJA's recommendations, but also other factors as indicated in this section.

Federal Award Administration Information

Federal Award Notices

See the [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#) for information on award notifications and instructions.

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 applicable requirements referred to in the assurances and certifications executed in connection with award acceptance).

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

Information Technology (IT) Security Clauses

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

General Information about Post-Federal Award Reporting Requirements

In addition to the deliverables described in the Program Description section, any recipient of an award under this solicitation will be required to submit certain reports and data.

Required reports. Recipients typically must submit quarterly financial reports, performance metrics, progress reports, final financial and progress reports, and, if applicable, an annual audit report in accordance with the Part 200 Uniform Requirements or specific award conditions. Future awards and fund drawdowns may be withheld if reports are delinquent. (In appropriate cases, OJP may require additional reports.)

In addition, 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 2021 grant funds, (2) identify the number and type of cases accepted during the FY 2021 award period by the forensic laboratory or laboratories that received FY 2021 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 2021 grant award, and (4) detail the progress of any unaccredited forensic science service provider that received FY 2021 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:

- The number and nature of any allegations of serious negligence or misconduct substantially affecting the integrity of forensic results.
- 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.

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

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

Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s)

For OJP contact(s), see solicitation cover page.

For contact information for Grants.gov and JustGrants, see solicitation cover page.

Other Information

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

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

Provide Feedback to OJP

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

Performance Measures

Award recipients will be required to submit performance measure data and performance reports in JustGrants. Examples of the performance measures questionnaire can be found at <https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/media/document/Coverdell-Measures.pdf>. Further guidance on the post-award submission process will be provided, if selected for award.

Application Checklist

Appendix A: Application Checklist

Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program — Competitive

This application checklist has been created as an aid in developing an application. The [DOJ Application Submission Checklist](#) is another resource.

What an Applicant Must Do:

Prior to Registering in Grants.gov:

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

To Register with Grants.gov:

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

To Find Funding Opportunity:

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

Overview of Post-Award Legal Requirements:

- Review the “[Overview of Legal Requirements Generally Applicable to OJP Grants and Cooperative Agreements - FY 2021 Awards](#)” in the [OJP Funding Resource Center](#).

Scope Requirement:

- The federal amount requested is within the allowable limit(s) of \$250,000

Eligibility Requirement: See Eligibility Section

- Submit **SF-424** and **SF-LLL** in Grants.gov

After SF-424 and SF-LLL Submission in Grants.gov, Receive Grants.gov Email Notifications That:

- Submission has been received in Grants.gov
- Submission has either been successfully validated or rejected with errors (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))

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

- Contact the Response Center by telephone at 800–851–3420 or TTY: 301–240–6310 (hearing impaired only) or by email at grants@ncjrs.gov. Response Center hours of operation are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. eastern time Monday through Friday, and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. eastern time on the solicitation close date.

Receive email notification to complete application in JustGrants:

- Complete Application in JustGrants

Content of Application Submission:

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

_ **Proposal Abstract**

_ **Proposal Narrative**

_ **Budget Worksheet and Budget Narrative (Web-based form)** (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))

_ **Five certifications required by the Coverdell law**

- Certification as to Plan for Forensic Science Laboratories — Application from a State*

OR

- Certification as to Plan for Forensic Science Laboratories — Application from a Unit of Local Government*
- Certification as to Generally Accepted Laboratory Practices and Procedures
- Certification as to Forensic Science Laboratory System Accreditation**
- Certification as to Use of Funds for New Facilities***
- Certification as to External Investigations

*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.

** Applicants requesting funds for only medical examiner’s offices or coroner’s offices in the state are not required to submit this certification.

*** Applicants must submit this certification even if no new facilities are being built.

Content of Application Submission

- Information to Complete the Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) in Grants.gov
- Intergovernmental Review

Budget and Associated Documentation

- Budget Worksheet and Budget Narrative (Web-based form)
- Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable) (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- Disclosure of Process related to Executive Compensation

Additional Application Components

- [External Investigations Attachment](#)
- Forensic Laboratory Accreditation Documentation (if applicable)
- Documentation of Advancing DOJ Priorities (if applicable)
- Documentation of high-poverty areas or persistent-poverty counties (if applicable)
- Potential Environmental Impact Coversheet and Checklist
- Research and Evaluation Independence and Integrity [insert if listed in the solicitation] (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- Request and Justification for Employee Compensation; Waiver (if applicable) (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))

Disclosures and Assurances

- [Disclosure of Lobbying Activities \(SF-LLL\)](#) (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- Applicant Disclosure of Duplication in Cost Items (Pending Applications) (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- DOJ Certified Standard Assurance (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))
- DOJ Certifications Regarding Lobbying; Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; and Drug-Free Workplace Requirements (see [OJP Grant Application Resource Guide](#))

Applicant Disclosure and Justification - DOJ High Risk Grantees (if applicable) (see [OJP Grant Application](#))

[Resource Guide](#))

Submit Application in JustGrants:

- Application has been successfully submitted in JustGrants

If No JustGrants Application Submission, Validation, or Error Notifications are Received:

- Contact JustGrants.Support@usdoj.gov or 833-872-5175 regarding technical difficulties

Appendix B

Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions

Frequently Asked Questions for the FY 2021 Paul Coverdell Competitive Solicitation

1. Q: Is one 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. That means if you submit multiple applications for different projects, you are in effect competing against yourself. (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 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 2021 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 2021 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. For eligibility, the applicant must meet the definition of a forensic laboratory:

- A state/local government entity performing forensic science services is considered a “forensic science laboratory” if it employs one or more full-time scientists:
 - With a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in a natural or formal science (e.g., chemistry, physics, biology, computer science, or a closely related field).
 - Whose principal function is to examine, analyze, and interpret physical and/or digital evidence in criminal matters and provide reports and testimony to courts of law regarding such evidence.
- Law enforcement units operating outside of the crime laboratory function, such as crime scene units and other entities that engage exclusively in evidence collection and documentation, are not forensic science laboratories for these purposes.

- Medical examiner and coroner offices are treated as forensic science laboratories.