



## **PROJECT OVERVIEW AND REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:**

### **BUILDING A RIGOROUS RESEARCH BASE FOR BODY WORN CAMERAS**

#### **Overview**

The Laura and John Arnold Foundation (LJAF) is a 501(c)(3) private foundation, whose core objective is to address our nation's most pressing and persistent challenges using evidence-based, multi-disciplinary approaches.

This RFP is soliciting research and evaluation project proposals to fill research gaps related to body worn cameras (BWCs). LJAF welcomes proposals that use rigorous designs and representative populations, that seek to have a broad impact, and that fill specific areas of BWC research outlined below that are important to the field but that have received little or no study.

#### **Request for Proposals and Specific Research Areas of Interest to the LJAF**

LJAF is pleased to continue its funding of cutting-edge, high-quality research on BWCs. In a period of less than a year, BWCs transformed from a technology that received little attention from many police leaders and scholars to one that has become rapidly prioritized, funded, and adopted in local policing. At the same time, this rapid adoption of BWCs is occurring within a low information environment; researchers are only beginning to develop knowledge about the effects of this technology. The need for more knowledge in this area is paramount, as the adoption of BWCs will likely have important implications for police-citizen interactions, police management and budgets, safety and security, citizen privacy, citizen reporting and cooperation with police, and practices in the courts. Given their rapid diffusion in law enforcement in just the last few years, understanding the intended and unintended effects of BWCs for both policing and the courts has become more important than ever.

In response to this need, LJAF announces this request for proposals for research on the impacts of BWCs. Specifically, LJAF seeks proposals for research on major gaps in our knowledge about BWCs, as identified by the recent LJAF report by Lum et al. (2015) entitled, *Existing and Ongoing Body Worn Camera Research: Knowledge gaps and opportunities* (located at <http://cebc.org/technology/body-cameras/>). This report revealed areas of BWC research that are now well covered by existing and ongoing research projects, as well as significant gaps in our knowledge that require further study. The LJAF will prioritize funding to specific areas of research that were identified by that report as under-researched (see Tables 2 and 4 of the Lum et al. report for more information):

- (1) Studies examining the impact of BWCs on everyday officer discretion.** Officers exercise wide discretion and make a variety of decisions in their work that often do not involve arrest, citation, or the use of force. However, the Lum et al. report found that

existing and ongoing research often examines the impact of BWCs on use of force and arrest practices (as well as complaints about these actions), and not other discretionary activities. More research is needed on the impact that BWCs have on how officers respond to calls for service and citizen requests, their proactive and problem-solving activities, and their daily interactions with members of the community. Understanding how the use of BWCs impacts all types of officer discretion and decision making is essential in understanding the intentional and unintentional consequences of BWC adoption.

- (2) **Studies examining the impact that BWCs have on relationships between law enforcement and communities of color.** Much of the justification behind BWCs has rested on a belief that cameras will change the way law enforcement officers relate to and treat communities and citizens of color. Two important concerns are whether BWCs will contribute to actual desired outcomes, such as the reduction of implicit or explicit bias, and also improvements in police fairness and procedural justice in minority communities.
- (3) **Studies examining the impact of BWCs on citizens' willingness to report crime and cooperate with the police.** Police in democracies rely on citizens to co-produce safety in many ways, from reporting crimes to acting as witnesses and guardians. Understanding how BWCs impact citizen willingness to report crimes to the police (and also call 911), report their own victimization, communicate in-person with police officers, act as guardians and engage in community policing collaborations, and cooperate with the police as witnesses and informants for investigations is a priority for funding.
- (4) **Studies examining the impact of BWCs on accountability systems within law enforcement agencies.** Those who have advocated for BWCs believe this technology can improve police accountability systems generally, as well as for critical incidents (e.g., officer-involved shootings). Organizational research will be considered for funding that examines the impact of BWCs on systems of discipline and supervision, processes related to internal affairs and critical incident assessments (i.e., officer-involved shootings), and also systems of complaint resolution. Please note that projects examining the impact of BWCs on the prevalence of complaints or use of force will not be funded, as existing research already covers these topics.
- (5) **Studies examining the impact of BWCs on court processes, in particular, those related to prosecution and criminal defense.** While almost all existing research has focused on the impact of BWCs in law enforcement, much more research is needed in understanding the consequences of this technology for the courts, court actors, and court processes. Such studies might examine the impact of BWCs on prosecutorial and defense behavior and practices, court efficiencies and outcomes, decision making by judges and jurors, and concerns about evidence.

### **Application Process**

The proposal submission will be two-staged. **Applicants will first submit a letter of interest by April 25, 2016.** The letter must be no more than three (3) pages (single spaced, 12-point font, 1-

inch margins). This letter of interest must include a discussion of the specific research question(s) to be examined, a description of the study design, the competencies of the research team, and the approximate cost of the research. In the letter of interest, applicants should also indicate the probability of gaining the cooperation of a law enforcement or courts entity to engage in the research. If invited to submit a full proposal, applicants will be required to provide evidence of the full cooperation of a law enforcement or courts agency. The letters of interest will be examined by LJAF in collaboration with their partners at the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy at George Mason University.

The Foundation will then invite some applicants to submit a formal proposal. All invitations for formal proposals will be issued by May 23, 2016, and will include a template for proposal submission. This template will include: 1) a narrative statement of no more than 5 pages describing the project, research question(s) examined, the research design and work to be performed, outcomes measured and project deliverables, intended impacts of the research, and dissemination and translational strategies and activities; 2) a detailed project budget and budget justification; 3) a detailed list of project milestones with timelines; and 4) a description of the project team and each member's role and competencies (including the curriculum vitae of all investigators). The deadline for formal proposals for invited projects will be July 15, 2016.

### **Selection Criteria**

Letters of interest and invited proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- (1) **IMPORTANCE:** LJAF seeks to fund research that specifically addresses one or more of the five areas highlighted above. These have been identified as pressing concerns and questions for which there is little existing or ongoing research. The importance of the research project will also be judged on its potential to impact the field of criminal justice and criminology, which is closely tied to the quality of that research project (see #2, below).
- (2) **STUDY DESIGN:** LJAF seeks to fund research of the highest quality and rigor. For evaluation research, LJAF prefers the use of randomized controlled experiments or highly rigorous quasi-experimental designs when randomization is not possible. Samples being randomized should be representative and sufficiently large to generate credible evidence. The intervention should be clearly described, including how key variables and outcomes will be measured. Research designs should include discussions of how fidelity will be maintained, as well as how research projects will avoid contamination, attrition, and other concerns affecting internal validity.

Not all of the research priority areas above are suitable for experimental outcome evaluation, and other types of research designs are welcomed. However, only highly rigorous quantitative and qualitative methods are sought for all research projects.

- (3) **EXPERIENCED RESEARCHER:** At least one key researcher on the project team should be experienced in conducting rigorous evaluation or implementation research with law enforcement or court practitioners. LJAF will prioritize research projects that have

teams with high levels of both general subject-matter and research design competence and experience, who can effectively and professionally work with criminal justice partners, and who can ensure the timely completion of research products according to set deadlines.

- (4) **FULL COOPERATION OF NECESSARY PARTNERS:** Examples of necessary parties can include researchers, agencies delivering interventions or providing data, or community groups and other stakeholders. *All invited proposals will be required to provide assurance of the full cooperation of necessary partners in examining the specific research questions posed and agreeing to the research design proposed.* In the process of final selection, reviewers may meet with team members and their practitioner partners to ensure that this criterion can be met. During the initial letter of intent, priority will be given to those research teams who provide assurance of cooperation from partners necessary for their research.
- (5) **OTHER ITEMS:** In the letter of interest, applicants should specify the amount of funding requested, and if invited, will be required to submit a full budget. Costs should be reasonable and justifiable. LJAF allows for project-related overhead expenses such as salaries, benefits, payments to third-party consultant and contractors, sub-grants, equipment, supplies, travel and expenses associated with acquiring or leasing new facilities and equipment to be included in direct costs; however, LJAF does not permit any of its grant resources to be spent on any overhead, operational administrative, or facilities costs and expenses (collectively, “indirect costs”). In the rare instances where the Board of Directors may approve of LJAF grant funds being spent on indirect costs because of extenuating circumstances substantiated in advance by the grantee, the maximum amount that may be approved will be at the sole discretion of the Board of Directors and will not exceed ten percent (10%) of the total LJAF grant awarded to grantee. Please check with your respective institutions about this requirement before submitting a letter of intent.

Applicants should briefly specify whether human subjects review will be needed for this project, how that review and approval will be obtained (e.g., through their institutional review boards or IRB), and how their study will meet the ethical standards required for human subjects.

**Please submit all letters of interest by April 25, 2016 to:**

**[BWCresearch@arnoldfoundation.org](mailto:BWCresearch@arnoldfoundation.org)**