



National Institute of Justice

S o l i c i t a t i o n

Jeremy Travis, Director

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Solicitation for Investigator-Initiated Research

APPLICATION DEADLINES:
June 17, 1997, and December 16, 1997

From the Director

Dear Colleague:

I am pleased to present this Solicitation for Investigator-Initiated Research, which invites the creative participation of the research community in developing knowledge that will inform the comprehensive public safety policies we need as we approach the 21st century.

We challenge you to build on the research of past decades that has helped us to focus on the relationship between crime and other social problems. We encourage you to experiment with practical approaches that will help in rethinking criminal justice and offer alternative means for solving recurring problems. And we invite you to seek collaboration with other organizations and disciplines in testing ideas and approaches that take us beyond the boundaries of criminal justice to involve the larger community.

The pages that follow offer a broad framework for research, along with specific avenues that could be explored. This solicitation asks you to stretch the limits of your skills and imagination to define and begin to confront the challenges facing us in the century ahead.

Jeremy Travis
Director
National Institute of Justice

Solicitation for Investigator-Initiated Research

Introduction

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is the research and development arm of the U.S. Department of Justice. Created by Congress in 1968, the Institute is charged with investing public funds to develop knowledge that will reduce crime, enhance public safety, and improve the administration of justice. Under its enabling legislation, NIJ is authorized to assist State and local justice systems in the following ways:

- By conducting and sponsoring basic and applied research into the causes and prevention of crime.
- By sponsoring evaluations of major Federal initiatives.
- By supporting research and demonstrations to develop new approaches, techniques, systems, and equipment to improve law enforcement and the administration of justice.
- By developing new technologies to deter crime and enhance criminal justice operations.
- By making recommendations to Federal, State, and local governments.
- By conducting conferences and workshops for criminal justice policymakers and professionals.
- By collecting and disseminating both domestic and international criminal justice information obtained by the Institute or other Federal agencies.

NIJ's research portfolio covers a diverse and dynamic array of research topics. Over the course of each year the Institute's research program evolves as a result of consultations with researchers, practitioners, State and local policymakers, and partnerships with other public and private organizations. The *NIJ Research Portfolio*, a list of ongoing NIJ research through 1995 with project descriptions, is available, and lists of FY 1996 awards as well as Crime Act awards will be available Spring 1997. The Institute encourages prospective applicants to consult these publications as well as *Building Knowledge About Crime and Justice: The 1997 Research Prospectus of the National Institute of Justice* as guides to NIJ's approach to criminal justice research. (See "For Additional Information" for guidance on how to obtain these documents.)

NIJ's extramural research program consists of two types of funding strategies: the directed solicitation and investigator-initiated solicitation. These solicitations differ extensively in the degrees of discretion allowed to applicants. Directed solicitations are narrowly focused—they specify a project goal, possibly indicate the methods to be considered and sites to be examined, and dictate the project start and end dates. The investigator-initiated solicitation offers general themes and invites applicants to submit study designs that will help the Institute accumulate a body of research that addresses these themes. The investigator-initiated research program is the most flexible of the Institute's funding opportunities.

Investigator-Initiated Research Program

Twice a year, NIJ receives and reviews research proposals that respond to the broad mandate of the Institute's solicitation for investigator-initiated research. Under this program, authors may submit proposals to explore any topic of relevance to State or local criminal justice policy or practice. In recent years, the investigator-initiated solicitation has focused on concerns such as violent crime, alcohol- and drug-related crime, community crime prevention, criminal justice system improvement, forensic science research, and technology development.

NIJ's Data Resources Program also awards funds for investigator-initiated research. This program supports secondary analysis of data sets created by NIJ grantees. A separate solicitation will be issued for this program.

Under its investigator-initiated solicitation, the Institute has generally awarded grants that range between \$25,000 and \$300,000 and last for 1 to 2 years. Proposals that request awards of less than \$50,000 will be considered "small grants." Small grants are available for all areas of research appropriate for larger grants. Applicants for small grants are required to limit their proposals to a total of 15 pages rather than the usual 30. Applicants should obtain application forms and policies for specific application requirements.

NIJ is firmly committed to a competitive process for awarding grants. Successful applicants for NIJ funds must

demonstrate to an independent peer review panel that (1) the gap in knowledge they propose to fill is critical to understanding of crime and justice and is highly policy relevant, (2) the proposed research design is rigorous, and (3) the researchers are highly qualified to execute that design within a reasonable budget. Peer review panelists consider both the technical and programmatic merits of the topic. The Institute's staff then make recommendations to the NIJ Director based on the results of the independent reviews. Final decisions are made by the NIJ Director after consultation with Institute staff.

NIJ believes that many of today's crime problems require solutions that extend beyond criminal justice boundaries. The Institute continues to actively discuss and promote research collaborations with other Federal agencies and private foundations and has established a variety of research partnerships. Some of these manifest themselves in the form of special solicitations on specific topics or programs of relevance to both NIJ and its partners. Others encourage collaborative or interdisciplinary research and offer the prospect of joint funding. Still others result in the development of shared research agendas. NIJ encourages researchers from all disciplines to explore the opportunities for collaborative efforts presented in this and directed solicitations and to propose arrangements that they are able to construct beyond those mentioned. NIJ particularly encourages coordination of research applications with submissions to other OJP agencies' annual programs.

Other Funding Opportunities

In addition to the funding opportunities under NIJ's Investigator-Initiated Program, the Institute announces more specific requests for research in its directed solicitations, which appear intermittently throughout the year. As noted above, these solicitations address more specific areas of research for which special funding is available. Most recently, activities funded under the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (Crime Act) have been focal points for these solicitations—specifically, community policing, violence against women, boot camps, sentencing and corrections, residential substance abuse, drug courts, policing technology, and local law enforcement and criminal justice technology. NIJ also issues solicitations under specific NIJ programs and for hypothesis-testing demonstrations of innovative programs or technologies.

NIJ solicitations are announced in the Federal Register and on the Justice Information Center home page on the World Wide Web (<http://www.ncjrs.org>). Interested applicants should telephone the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) at 800-851-3420 or e-mail askncjrs@ncjrs.com for pending releases and dates of announcement.

Research Themes

This section provides potential applicants an overview of the Institute's current interests. Because the Institute strives to meet the needs of the field, these interests are constantly evolving. However, the themes presented here represent a fairly stable and broad vision of directions that the Institute intends to pursue in the next few years. Applicants may wish to relate their proposed research to the themes articulated in the following sections or develop research concepts that build on them. Alternatively, applicants may wish to develop and propose research projects that fall outside the themes the Institute presents here on the condition that the proposed research falls within NIJ's statutory mission.

Rethinking Justice. In 1965, Lyndon Johnson created the President's Crime Commission and charged its members to "give us the blueprints to banish crime." While the Commission's reports fell far short of that ambitious goal, its "blueprints," presented in *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society* (1967), exerted strong and persistent influences upon the activities of the American justice system. Since the Commission delivered its findings 30 years ago, the Nation has witnessed the development of stronger and more coordinated criminal justice operations, greater professionalism among staff and management, significant improvements in the delivery of justice, and the development of research-based knowledge about crime and justice. As the 21st century approaches, the country faces new challenges to public safety, new demands on the justice system, and a need for research-based assessments of criminal justice processes and practices.

Under the theme of rethinking justice, the Institute encourages the research community to propose and execute studies that improve on the delivery of justice and public safety as they build upon the existing base of research knowledge, fill in gaps, and test key hypotheses. Studies should examine ways to achieve the purposes of the justice system, such as swift and certain apprehension of

criminals, fair and speedy trials, appropriate punishments, and concern for crime victims. Investigators could also consider new ways to conceptualize and deliver justice as well as enhance the responsiveness of the justice system in modern society. The topics indicated below are meant to illustrate ways to respond to this challenge and stimulate applicants to consider nontraditional research problems:

- Redefining the missions of criminal justice agencies—by incorporating nontraditional functions, by overlapping and coordinating services with other justice and nonjustice organizations, and by developing new models of indigent defense.
- Involving the community in delivering justice—through such means as community policing, community-based prosecution, and restorative justice.
- Benefiting from victims’ perspectives on justice system outcomes—by exploring the implications of victims’ rights initiatives and looking at communities as victims of criminal enterprises.
- Exploring the role of the courts—particularly community-oriented and outcome-focused courts.
- Integrating justice concepts—by improving coordination between adult and juvenile justice system processes; combining legal strategies used in civil and criminal systems.

Understanding the Nexus. The existence of persistent relationships between crime and other social problems has been understood for several decades. The President’s Crime Commission reports provided the first reliable estimates of illicit drug consumption. They discussed the uses of heroin, marijuana, and alcohol and the possible connections between these substances and criminal behavior. Other researchers of that time identified links between crime and other phenomena, including poverty, illiteracy, and racial prejudice. Research of the past 20 years has led to a better understanding of these relationships and provided empirical evidence of links between high levels of drug consumption and criminal activity. Research has also identified relationships between child abuse and neglect and victims’ subsequent criminal activity as well as between crime and mental illness. Despite this progress, there are substantial gaps in our knowledge about the connections between crime and other social phenomena.

Under the theme of understanding the nexus, the Institute challenges researchers to explore and develop further the theoretical linkages between criminal activity and other

social phenomena and to verify the correlations and temporal connections through empirical observation and analysis. Studies could examine the strength and consistency of the relationships, the dynamic sequencing of life events, and the persistence of connections between crime and these other conditions. Investigators might explore whether certain phenomena have only episodic or transitory connections to crime. They might ask whether conventional wisdom has overlooked additional phenomena or intervening circumstances that concurrently influence criminal behavior and other undesirable social outcomes. Below are examples of topics that the Institute encourages under this theme:

- Effects of drug consumption on criminal activity and of criminal activity on drug consumption.
- Connections between disorder offenses (and rule breaking) and the commission of felonies.
- The influence of child abuse and neglect on the victim’s potential for future criminal behavior.
- Connections between such factors as community labor markets, unemployment, poverty, and race, as well as the development of criminal lifestyles within families and communities.
- Juvenile drug use and the escalation of juvenile firearms violence.
- Research on drugs and alcohol, and their connections with domestic violence.
- Involvement of juveniles in criminal infrastructures (e.g., gangs and consignment thefts).

Breaking the Cycle. Much of the activity within the criminal justice system centers around recurring problems. Offenders are arrested, tried, sentenced, released, and rearrested. Police respond to the same locations month after month with no apparent resolution. Problems recur and offenders recidivate with great frequency and some predictability. In frustration, both criminal justice professionals and the public have coined phrases like “revolving door justice,” “career criminals,” and “hot spots.” Under its theme of breaking the cycle, the Institute encourages researchers and practitioners to experiment with practical solutions to recurring criminal justice problems. The theme is a logical extension of understanding the nexus. If one can identify connections between crime and other social conditions, then one should experiment with policies that break the connections.

This theme is largely evaluative in nature. It encourages researchers, possibly in conjunction with one or more operational agencies, to test interventions for recurring problems and to report on the outcomes of those interventions. In all cases, investigators should articulate the problem to be addressed, the theoretical issues to be explored, and the nature of the possible intervention. When estimating their budget requests, investigators should note that NIJ policy prohibits the use of grant funds for operational, training, publication, or other nonresearch costs of the project. The topics listed below suggest the range of interventions that NIJ is willing to consider under this theme:

- Interventions that curtail drug abuse in offender populations; interventions against drugs and violence.
- Interventions in sex offender and spouse batterer behaviors.
- Parenting skill interventions for parents and guardians in at-risk households and neighborhoods.
- Recent welfare reforms and “workfare” initiatives and their impacts on delinquency in at-risk families.
- Effects of eliminating “hot spots” on a neighborhood’s quality of life and business activity.
- Treatment of populations that shuttle between criminal justice and mental health agencies.
- Interventions for repeat victimizations.

Creating the Tools. Improvements in our understanding of problems have enabled criminal justice professionals to respond to events more quickly, more completely, and with greater coordination than ever before. While recent advances in information technology have helped management staff learn of new technologies, agency acquisition processes and the internal expertise needed to adopt these innovations have been limited. As a consequence of the higher priority now given to public safety, justice agencies’ employment and personnel costs have risen and become serious budgetary concerns for many local jurisdictions. Few agencies can afford to experiment or even survey markets for new ideas or practices, and agencies’ analytic capabilities remain limited and fragmented. Thus, local systems must rely on Federal research and evaluation as primary sources of information on technological advances.

Under the theme of creating the tools, the Institute asks professionals to help develop, test, and evaluate new and transferrable techniques, practices, and technologies for

the criminal justice system. The Institute will give priority to proposals to improve the abilities of agencies to perform critical missions or to enhance performance of line personnel in core positions. NIJ interests are not confined to the developmental function but include needs assessment and field testing of new technologies. They also include evaluation of their impacts on the performance of personnel and organizations. Improved and affordable information management within and across all justice functions is of particular interest. The topics below suggest some of the many technological possibilities that NIJ would consider under this theme:

- Nonintrusive concealed weapons and contraband detection technology.
- Car- and vehicle-stopping technology.
- Enhanced DNA testing technology.
- Officer protection technology.
- Procedures, equipment, and technologies for forensic laboratories.
- Less-than-lethal incapacitation technology.
- Information and data management technology.
- Counterterrorism technology.
- Crime mapping and crime analysis technology.
- Profiling.
- Location and tracking technology.
- Secure communications (INFOTECH/telephone/radio/Internet) technology.
- Drug detection and forensic science technology.

Applicants should note that NIJ’s technology program focuses on research and development and does not support the purchase of equipment for law enforcement and corrections agencies.

Expanding the Horizons. Criminal justice research has expended the majority of its resources on combating mainstream crimes as defined by the President’s Crime Commission. At the heart of the Commission’s interests were the common everyday crimes familiar to every household and linked to public fear and anxiety. The Commission focused on stranger-to-stranger crimes like robbery, assault, and burglary. It also treated kindred activities such as organized crime and drug crime in detail.

Familial crimes like domestic violence and child abuse were not significant parts of the Commission's inquiry, nor did members concentrate on white collar frauds, financial swindles, smuggling, political corruption, or transnational crime. Computer crimes and environmental crimes had barely been discovered in 1967 and are still neglected areas of study.

The Institute, under its theme of expanding the horizons, asks the research community to move beyond traditional crime definitions and criminal relationships. Investigators can consider how better to describe and classify new criminal events and to identify new threats to public safety that will continue into the 21st century. They might also consider new, nontraditional forms of criminal enterprise including new criminal marketplaces. NIJ is also strongly interested in new approaches law enforcement and other domestic agencies can adopt to combat crime of all definitions. The topics below indicate some of the many possibilities worthy of study in this area:

- Interconnections among criminal agents—including the fencing and smuggling of stolen goods and the vertical integration of crime markets.
- Transnational crime—in which criminals escape from domestic law enforcement with the assistance of international criminal partners. Research projects could involve the exploration of links to transnational crime in immigrant communities and the fostering of international investigative and prosecutorial collaborations.
- Cybercrimes—the use of computer technology to commit and facilitate crimes. Ways need to be developed to detect and prosecute computer hacking and fraud.
- Law enforcement with nontraditional partners such as public housing or transportation authorities. Research could explore creative partnerships with nonjustice organizations like health services or corporations.
- Innovative sanctions for corporate frauds, environmental pollution, and corruption.
- Investigation, prosecution, and punishment for personal frauds, scams, and con games.

Application Information

Persons interested in submitting research proposals under this solicitation must complete the required application material (see below for how to obtain application policies and forms). Applications must include the following information or completed forms to qualify for funding:

1. Topic Area Designation form.
2. Standard Form (SF) 424—application for Federal assistance.
3. Assurances.
4. Certifications Regarding Lobbying, Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; and Drug-Free Workplace Requirements.
5. Disclosure of Lobbying Activities.
6. Budget Detail Worksheet.
7. Negotiated indirect rate agreement (if appropriate).
8. Names and affiliations of all key persons from applicant and subcontractor(s), advisers, consultants, and advisory board members. Include name of principal investigator, title, organizational affiliation (if any), department (if institution of higher education), address, phone, and fax.
9. Proposal abstract.
10. Table of contents.
11. Program narrative or technical proposal.
12. Privacy certificate.
13. References.
14. Letters of cooperation from organizations collaborating in the research project.
15. Resumes.
16. Appendixes, if any (e.g., list of previous NIJ awards, their status, and products [in NIJ or other publications]).

When estimating their budget requests, investigators should note that NIJ policy prohibits the use of grant funds for operational, training, publication, or other nonresearch costs of the project.

For Additional Information. The NIJ publications listed below provide additional information about NIJ programs, funding opportunities, and ongoing research. Prospective applicants are encouraged to consult these publications as they develop their proposals. All are available electronically from the Justice Information Center on the World Wide Web (<http://www.ncjrs.org>) or by calling NCJRS at 800-851-3420.

- NIJ Research in Brief: *NIJ Fiscal Year 1996 Awards (forthcoming)*.
- NIJ Research in Brief: *NIJ Fiscal Year 1995-96 Crime Act Awards (forthcoming)*.
- *Building Knowledge About Crime and Justice: The 1997 Research Prospectus of the National Institute of Justice* (NCJ 163708).
- *Research on Crime and Justice; National Institute of Justice Year in Review 1995* (NCJ 162042).
- NIJ Research in Brief: *NIJ Research Portfolio* (NCJ 162204).

Applicants may wish to discuss their potential research topics with NIJ program staff. Those who wish to do so should contact the Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770. Center staff can provide additional guidance and information to potential applicants and refer them to an appropriate NIJ professional.

Obtaining Application Forms. To obtain application forms and instructions and a guide for submitting proposals (includes requirements for proposal writers and requirements for award recipients), applicants can:

- Access the Justice Information Center on the World Wide Web: <http://www.ncjrs.org/fedgrant.htm#nij>. NIJ application policies and forms are available as electronic files that may be downloaded to a personal computer.
- Request mail delivery from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at 800-851-3420.
- Make a request to the Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770.

Ten (10) copies of fully executed proposals must be received by NIJ by the close of business on **June 17, 1997**, or **December 16, 1997**. Proposals must be sent to the following address:

Investigator-Initiated Solicitation
[topic area from the list on the opposite page]
National Institute of Justice
810 Seventh Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20531

SL000201

Topic Area Designation Form

To facilitate assignment of proposals to NIJ peer review panels, the application material includes this form for indicating whether an applicant is applying for a small grant (under \$50,000) and for designating a topic area that most appropriately reflects the reviewer expertise needed to review the proposal.

PLEASE MARK THE MOST APPROPRIATE BOX BELOW AND INCLUDE THIS FORM AS THE TOP SHEET OF YOUR APPLICATION.

Small grant

All other grants

- Corrections
- Courts and prosecution
- Violence and other criminal behaviors
- Domestic violence and violence against women
- Victims of crime
- Situational crime prevention
- Juvenile and community crime prevention
- Crime mapping
- Policing practices
- Police organization and administration
- Other police and law enforcement topics
- Firearms
- Drugs
- White collar crime
- Forensics
- Criminal justice technology
- Criminal justice system studies

For more information on the National Institute of Justice, please contact:

National Criminal Justice Reference Service

Box 6000
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To access the World Wide Web site, go to
<http://www.ncjrs.org>

If you have any questions, call or e-mail NCJRS.