

# Solicitation for the Study of Illegal Firearms Markets: Fiscal Year 1997

## I. Introduction

Based on a Memorandum of Understanding between the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), this solicitation seeks proposals to utilize data collected by ATF and local police in a special Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative to study illegal gun markets in five cities selected for in-depth analysis. Certain general analyses of ATF trace data across all seventeen cities participating in this initiative will also be required.

## II. Background

One of the most critical issues in addressing the reduction of violence and its consequences is the role that firearms play in contributing to violent

NIJ is trying to streamline its process to accommodate the volume of proposals anticipated under this and other Crime Act solicitations. Researchers can help in a significant way by sending NIJ a nonbinding letter of intent by June 20, 1997. The Institute will use these letters to forecast the numbers of peer panels it needs and to identify conflicts of interest among potential reviewers. There are three ways to send these letters. You can fill out the mailer on the last page of this solicitation. You can reach NIJ by Internet by sending e-mail to [tellnij@ncjrs.org](mailto:tellnij@ncjrs.org) and identifying the solicitation and section(s) you expect to apply for. You can write a letter with the same information to Solicitation for the Study of Illegal Firearms Markets: Fiscal Year 1997., 633 Indiana Avenue N.W., Room 303, Washington, DC 20531. Help us help you.

crime, serious injury and death. This is especially true in the United States, one of the most heavily armed populations in the world. An NIJ-funded National Survey of Private Ownership of Firearms found that 192 million working firearms were in private hands in 1994, about a third of which were handguns.

FBI figures on homicide indicate that, of the 23,760 homicides reported in 1992, 68.2 percent were committed with a firearm, 80 percent of these with a handgun. As measured by the National Crime Victimization Survey, the rate of nonfatal handgun victimizations in 1992 was the highest on record, at 4.5 crimes per 1,000 people aged 12 or older, with males, blacks, and the young having the highest handgun victimization rates.

The consequences of firearms violence are especially great for teenagers and young adults. For example, in 1990, among those 15-24, one out of every four deaths was caused by a firearm. For young black males, aged 15-24, homicide is the leading cause of death, and about 80 per cent of these victims were killed with guns.

Juvenile firearms offending has also increased dramatically in recent years. In a 1993 NIJ/Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention survey of incarcerated juveniles and inner-city high school students, findings showed that 83 percent of inmates and 22 per cent of students possessed guns, with 55 and 12 per cent, respectively, carrying guns all or most of the time. Of the inmate sample, 63 per cent had committed crimes with guns and 40 per cent had obtained a gun specifically for use in crime.

Although laws exist that prohibit criminals, juveniles, and other high-risk individuals from purchasing a gun, most offenders acquire their firearms by theft or from illegitimate or informal sources that are virtually impossible to regulate.

An NIJ-funded survey of incarcerated adult felons found that the predominant motive for being armed was self-defense, that felons primarily acquired guns through theft and illegal or informal channels, and that they believed they would have no trouble getting a gun upon their release from prison. The aforementioned juvenile survey found that incarcerated and high-risk juveniles, like the adult felon sample, reported acquiring guns for self-protection and self-preservation, often through illegal and informal street "markets."

A 1993 The National Academy of Sciences Panel report, Understanding and Preventing Violence, specifically recommended juvenile firearms markets as an important area for continued research.

In FY 1994, NIJ funded a study in Boston, involving Harvard University, the Boston Police Department, the ATF, and other local criminal justice and social service agencies, to examine the informal and illegal channels through which juveniles acquired firearms, including the tracing of all confiscated guns through the ATF Tracing Center. Based on its findings, innovative prevention and control strategies targeting these markets (primarily gangs) were designed by these organizations and are currently being implemented. Preliminary evaluation findings are very encouraging, showing a significant reduction in juvenile (and young adult) gun homicide and violence in the targeted high-crime areas.

### **III. ATF's Project LEAD**

In late 1995, ATF introduced Project LEAD to its 24 field division offices. Project LEAD is a computer software program that enables law enforcement to organize and analyze crime gun trace information in the database of the National Tracing Center (NTC). The software is an automated link analysis information system that organizes the trace data, providing information on potential illegal firearms trafficking patterns, illegal purchasers, problem Federal Firearms

Licenses (FFLs), and geographic sources of crime gun supply.

#### **A. ATF's Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative**

Based in part on the Boston program, and utilizing Project LEAD software, the Treasury Department Enforcement Division and ATF are implementing a special Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative in cooperation with the local police departments in seventeen cities. [See **Sidebar A for a list of these seventeen sites.**] This initiative was announced by President Clinton in a special White House ceremony on July 8, 1996 and implementation began early in 1997. Local participating departments have agreed (1) to request ATF traces through Project LEAD for all confiscated crime guns in order to identify their point of original FFL purchase, and (2) to collect detailed incident and offender data on all juvenile confiscations. Trace data are being collected on

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#### **Sidebar A: List of Cities Participating in the ATF Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative**

**Atlanta, Georgia**  
**Baltimore, Maryland\***  
**Birmingham, Alabama**  
**Boston, Massachusetts**  
**Bridgeport, Connecticut**  
**Cleveland, Ohio**  
**Inglewood, California**  
**Jersey City, New Jersey**  
**Memphis, Tennessee\***  
**Milwaukee, Wisconsin\***  
**New York, New York\***  
**Richmond, Virginia**  
**Salinas, California**  
**San Antonio, Texas\***  
**Seattle, Washington**  
**St. Louis, Missouri**  
**Washington, D.C.**

\* Indicates that this site is one of the five selected for in-depth gun market analysis

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confiscated guns beginning in January, 1996. ATF will also conduct end-to-end traces on a subset of confiscated juvenile guns. These end-to-end traces reflect all secondary transfers of the firearm from the original FFL purchase to its confiscation by police.

## **B. NIJ's Partnership with ATF and Treasury**

Following a series of strategic planning sessions, ATF and NIJ signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a research effort based on the Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative. Given the interest that both agencies have in illegal and juvenile gun markets and the opportunities presented by the extensive trace and incident/offender data being collected in the seventeen sites, NIJ announces this limited solicitation to firearms researchers for proposals to analyze these data for the purpose of studying illegal channels of firearms distribution, especially to juveniles.

## **IV. Scope of Work for the Study**

While the Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative is being implemented in seventeen cities, NIJ recognizes that detailed gun market analyses would not be feasible in all of them for a variety of reasons, including limitations in electronic data bases and/or small numbers of gun confiscations in some sites. Therefore, following a scanning of the local police department data in all sites, conducted by an outside contractor, five cities were selected for intensive examination based on the following criteria: (1) the quality, quantity, and time frame of automated local police department data related to gun confiscations and incidents, especially for juveniles; (2) the size of the gun violence problem, including number of gun crimes and number of firearms confiscated annually, especially those involving juveniles; and (3) diversity of city size, region, and ethnic makeup. The selected sites are: **Baltimore, Memphis, Milwaukee, New York City, and San Antonio.** Applicants who have access to the necessary data

from other ATF Initiative sites may choose to add these to their proposals, as well, although this is not required.

For each of the five selected jurisdictions, applicants should describe in detail how they would:

- construct a data base reflecting multiple existing data resources: (1) computerized ATF Project LEAD trace data on all confiscated firearms; (2) ATF end-to-end trace data on a subset of confiscated juvenile firearms; (3) local law enforcement records on confiscated gun incidents and offenders, especially juveniles (e.g., offender socio-demographics, criminal history, gang connections; crime type, circumstances, and location; firearm type, make, value, and time-to-crime; relevant GIS/mapping data, etc.); and (4) other relevant data (e.g., Census data);
- analyze these data for the purpose of identifying patterns of illegal firearms trafficking, especially youth firearms trafficking;
- conduct limited interviews with knowledgeable local criminal justice practitioners (e.g., beat officers, police gang units, juvenile officers, probation officers) regarding their perceptions and experience with adult and juvenile firearms markets, but only if this is necessary to understand the meaning of the law enforcement data; and
- produce a final research report which will: (1) describe illegal adult and juvenile gun markets and patterns for each jurisdiction studied; (2) compare these across jurisdictions; (3) assess gun tracing as a viable method for uncovering and describing illegal gun markets; and (4) identify the data collection elements and systems necessary for police departments and ATF to collect in the future in order to improve the analysis of illegal gun markets in other jurisdictions, especially those targeting juveniles.

In addition to the detailed gun market analyses to be conducted in these five cities, some general trace and trend analyses will also be required across all of the seventeen participating sites, utilizing computerized data furnished to the study by the ATF's National Tracing Center (NTC) [See Sidebar B below]

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#### **Data Elements Available from ATF's NTC**

- Number of crime gun trace requests
- Crime gun trace requests by type of firearm
- Crime gun trace requests by type of firearm, manufacturer, and caliber
- Crime gun trace requests by type of crime
- Time-to-crime for firearms traced
- Time-to-sale (shelf life) for firearms traced
- Source States of traced firearms
- Number of traced guns with obliterated serial numbers
- Gang/drug associations of possessors of traced guns (if Applicable and known)
- Disposition of traces (by ATF category, including "stolen guns")
- Number of traced guns for which Federal firearms licensees (FFLs) are identified
- Number of traced guns for which first purchasers are identified
- Number of additional crime guns (from any site) traced to FFLs with at least one participant site trace
- Number of crime guns traced to multiple sales (after initiation of multiple-sale data base at the Tracing Center)

\* Not all data elements may be present for all traced guns and/or from all sites

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NIJ expects to fund one grant for the detailed gun market analyses of all five selected in-depth cities and the general analyses across all seventeen sites. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to form research partnerships with other experienced firearms researchers to conduct this study. Each research partner would have responsibility for the in-depth gun market

analyses in one or more cities and/or the seventeen-site general trace analyses, but would be joined in a consortium under one grantee. Such a consortium structure would have several important benefits. First, NIJ recognizes that particular researchers may have developed previous research relationships with local departments in some of the sites and/or may be located nearby, facilitating on-site tasks. In addition, a variety of research perspectives and experience is desired in this study of illegal gun markets and a consortium of researchers will provide this opportunity.

The overall amount available for study is approximately \$500,000, for fifteen months' duration. Applicants are asked to prepare separate budgets for each of the five in-depth sites and for the general analyses of electronic ATF tracing center data across all seventeen sites. A standard overall budget and budget narrative is also required. Proposals should include a detailed research design and analysis plan, as well as a management plan for each site and the overall study. A description of how the final report will be written and organized is also required. The text of the proposal (excluding budget, budget narrative, and appendices) may not exceed **thirty (30) double-spaced pages**.

Copies of the ATF Tracing Form and the names and telephone numbers of the ATF and local police department coordinators for the Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative in each of the seventeen participating sites (including the five selected in-depth sites) may be obtained from the Department of Justice Response Center (phone: 800/421-6770) upon request. Numbers for the National Tracing Center are also included in the material. Applicants are asked to confine their contacts with the sites to these coordinators.

## V. How to Apply

Those interested in submitting proposals in response to this solicitation must complete the required application forms and submit related required documents. (See below for how to obtain application forms and guides for completing proposals.) Applicants must include the following information/forms to qualify for funding:

- Standard Form (SF) 424—application for Federal assistance
- Assurances
- Certifications Regarding Lobbying, Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; and Drug-Free Workplace Requirements (one form)
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- Budget Detail Worksheet
- Negotiated indirect rate agreement (if appropriate)
- Names and affiliations of all key persons from applicant and subcontractor(s), advisors, 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.
- Proposal abstract
- Table of contents
- Program narrative or technical proposal
- Privacy certificate, as appropriate
- References
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Letters of cooperation from organizations collaborating in the research project.

- Résumés
- Appendixes, if any (e.g., list of previous NIJ awards, their status, and products [in NIJ or other publications]).

**Due date.** Completed proposals **must be received** at the National Institute of Justice by the close of business on July 18, 1997. Extensions of this deadline will not be permitted.

**Award period.** As stated before, the period of this award will be 15 months.

**Number of awards.** As indicated in Section III above, NIJ anticipates funding one grant award for the entire study, preferably to a consortium of firearms researchers organized under one grantee.

**Award amount.** The award will total approximately \$500,000 for this solicitation.

**Obtaining application forms.** To obtain application forms (including a sample budget worksheet) and guidelines for submitting proposals (including requirements for proposal writers and requirements for grant recipients), applicants can:

- Access the Justice Information Center on the Web: <http://www.ncjrs.org/fedgrant.htm#NIJ>. At this site, the NIJ application forms and guidelines are available as electronic files that may be downloaded to a personal computer.
- Request hard copies of the forms and guidelines by mail from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service at 800-851-3420 or from the Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770 (in the Washington, D.C., area, at 202-307-1480).
- Request copies by fax. Call 800-851-3420 and select option 1, then option 1 again for NIJ. Code is 1023.

### Send completed forms to:

Ten copies of fully executed proposals, including one original-signature copy should be submitted to:

Solicitation for the Study of Illegal Firearms Markets: Fiscal Year 1997  
National Institute of Justice  
633 Indiana Avenue N.W., Room 303  
Washington, DC 20531