



BJA Bureau of Justice Assistance Bulletin

Nancy E. Gist, Director

Message From the Director

Our nation's most powerful weapon against crime and drug abuse is the innovative and often unsung work of criminal justice practitioners across the country. The most important mission of the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and all U.S. Department of Justice agencies, is to support their diligent work. Only when state and federal dollars support tested and community-backed local initiatives do we make our neighborhoods stronger and our communities safer.

This BJA bulletin describes one such federal program, which has received enthusiastic support from local officials. During the past 4 years, the Local Law Enforcement Block Grants Program has emphasized local decisionmaking, and its success confirms what local criminal justice practitioners have long argued: generic, one-size-fits-all programs do not meet the needs of this country's diverse communities.

Nancy E. Gist

A History of the Local Law Enforcement Block Grants Program: Supporting Local Solutions to Crime

Differences over local spending priorities and federal grant limitations have almost always provoked debate among local, state, tribal, and federal officials. Public safety needs and law enforcement resources in Miami, Florida, for example, are not exactly the same as needs and resources in Ann Arbor, Michigan; Longview, Texas; or Burlington, Vermont.

The Local Law Enforcement Block Grants (LLEBG) Program encourages communities to craft their own responses to local crime and drug problems. Congress acknowledged the need for community discretion in allocating funds to fight crime when it appropriated funds for LLEBG through the Omnibus Fiscal Year 1996 Appropriations Act. In the program's first 3 years (FY 1996–1998), more than \$1.2 billion was distributed to local communities. This money has given communities the freedom to create initiatives that not only fight crime but also improve the quality of community life.

According to Ed Winchester, Chief of Police in Fresno, California, LLEBG funds are “the best money we get from state and federal sources because we are able to expend funds to meet our local needs in the way we see fit. The Skywatch Operations funded by LLEBG is making a difference every night on the streets of Fresno and would not have been possible without the block grant funds.”

Broad participation in local decisions on how to spend LLEBG money is critical to the program's success. Each jurisdiction is required to establish an advisory board to review projected LLEBG allocations by program areas and hold at least one public hearing regarding the funds' use. The advisory board must include representatives of the local law enforcement agency, prosecutor's office, court, and school system, as well as representatives of nonprofit, religious, educational, or community organizations active in crime prevention or substance-abuse treatment.

Although many jurisdictions report low attendance at public hearings prior to grant approval, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), the federal agency administering LLEBG, has urged prospective recipients to make every effort to generate broad attendance and discussion.

Implementation: BJA's Innovative Approach

The LLEBG Program authorized the Director of BJA to disburse billions of dollars over 5 years to state and local governments and Indian tribes to reduce crime and improve public safety.

Within 5 months of the appropriation, BJA worked closely with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) to develop an eligibility formula for allocating funds. BJA invited participation by state, local, and tribal governments in efforts to simplify the grant process by which BJA would manage the program's unusually large number of applications and awards. Within the first year of operation, LLEBG disbursed approximately \$405 million in grants to more than 2,755 eligible applicants from all 50 states, 5 territories, and some 2,700 local jurisdictions and Indian tribes.

BJA has since moved far beyond its initial attempts to automate standardized grant management forms. In these first efforts, designed to reduce paperwork during

the review and award process, BJA standardized the reporting forms and converted its multiple-page application to a one-page form serving all customers. This streamlined approach was recognized by the Vice President's National Performance Review Hammer Award and by the Department of Justice JustWorks Program. BJA is committed to delivering the LLEBG

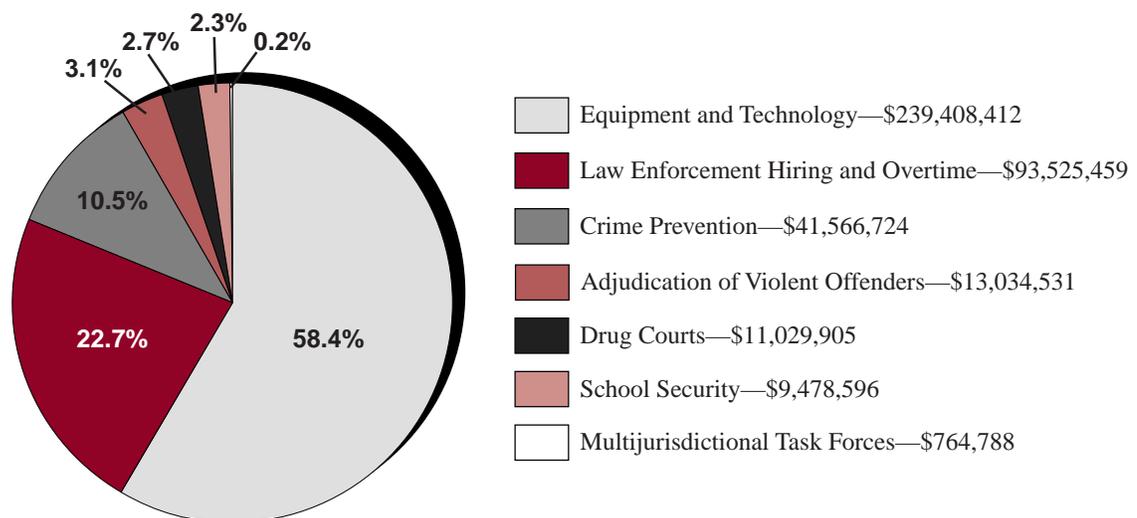
"LLEBG is making a difference every night on the streets of Fresno."

Ed Winchester, Chief of Police, Fresno, California

Program and other BJA-administered programs through the environment of electronic commerce by the end of fiscal year (FY) 2000. Information now exchanged between grantees and BJA through a high volume of mail, faxes, and telephone discussions will become deliverable through a fully integrated, Internet-based grants management system with a user-friendly Web-based interface.

Any piece of information needed by grantees and BJA staff to ensure the success of a local LLEBG-funded activity will be centralized and readily available to users. BJA is not only designing and implementing this approach, but ensuring that a full spectrum of help functions

Local Law Enforcement Block Grants Spending: Fiscal Year 1998



Total: \$409,271,181*

*LLEBG recipients spent 0.1 percent of total to provide indemnification insurance.

will be implemented to support this evolutionary milestone in the way BJA conducts public business.

The LLEBG Program continues to reach out to eligible jurisdictions. An unprecedented number of communities, from remote villages to major metropolises, have applied for and received LLEBG assistance—3,382 in FY 1998 alone.

Many initiatives reflect a growing national enthusiasm for cooperative and comprehensive approaches to addressing complex public safety issues.

The following observation by Randall Stout, a police captain in Detroit, Michigan, with 28 years of service, is typical of comments made to BJA staff. He notes that LLEBG is a federal assistance program the city has felt comfortable participating in:

Traditionally, city officials only apply for state law enforcement grants, mostly because they believe federal grant programs require too much paperwork and are considered too restrictive in their program guidelines. The city decided to participate in LLEBG because its broad purpose areas allow locals to determine how to use the funds. Another factor was LLEBG's low-maintenance application and reporting requirements.

BJA has supported its many new grantees through an extensive technical assistance and training program, which includes grants administration training sessions. In general, the level of compliance with program requirements remains high—a gratifying accomplishment in a program of this magnitude.

How Grantees Are Using LLEBG Funding

Within the LLEBG Program's legislatively authorized spending areas, Indian tribes, states, and units of local government are carrying out a multitude of projects. Funding to update equipment and technology and hire additional officers has consistently led grant requests, with crime prevention activities second. Many initiatives reflect a growing national enthusiasm for cooperative and comprehensive approaches to addressing complex public safety issues. In fact, almost all

LLEBG-funded allocations incorporate aspects of community policing in some manner.

Law Enforcement Hiring and Overtime

Many LLEBG recipients are hiring more law enforcement officers or supplementing existing resources, although the money spent on these purposes has decreased each year. In 1998, 22 percent of grant funds went to personnel costs, down from 31 percent in 1996. The roles of these new personnel are as diverse as the jurisdictions themselves. Clearly, a significant overlap exists among the first and the other purpose areas, especially among crime prevention, school security, drug courts, and multijurisdictional task force projects.

Grant recipients implementing LLEBG projects come from Indian tribal councils, police and sheriff's headquarters, schools, district attorney's offices, family and drug courts, mayor's and governor's offices, public housing authorities, and substance-abuse and mental health treatment agencies. Citizens have targeted the full gamut of crimes as priorities for their LLEBG funds: domestic violence, drug trafficking, gang violence, drunk and aggressive driving by adults and juveniles, property crimes, theft (including auto and bank theft), parking and traffic law enforcement, carjackings, sex offenses, truancy and curfew violations, and methamphetamine production.

Building bridges and forming new partnerships among agencies and professionals who have not worked cooperatively before appears to be a priority nationwide. This priority is apparent in the numerous LLEBG-supported crime prevention and multijurisdictional task force projects. Evidence of innovative LLEBG partnerships between law enforcement and community organizations is reflected in a range of projects, from literacy training for Hmong refugee latchkey children in St. Paul, Minnesota, a city-state-federal project, to the Family Ties Program in Orange County, Florida, an effort that brings together the Ninth Judicial Circuit Court, county commissioners, the school board, University of Florida advanced psychology students, and the sheriff's office to reduce violence between custodial and noncustodial parents by providing a safe location for child visitation and counseling.

Equipment and Technology

Over the past 4 years the majority of jurisdictions have opted to allocate their LLEBG funds for equipment and technology—46 percent in 1996, 53 percent in 1997, and 58 percent in 1998.

For some jurisdictions, the availability of funding for new technology appears critical. Several locations, including large cities, report antiquated information/communications systems and an urgent need for both equipment and training. A July 1998 BJA report on a site visit to Detroit, Michigan, noted that LLEBG funding “will put technology—computers and network infrastructure—where little or none currently exists. Currently, the systems are very fragmented with very little to no data-sharing capabilities. The [limited] technology that does exist is seriously outdated.”

“This grant has saved lives.”

Lieutenant Ken Phillips, Assistant Chief of Police, Village of Los Lunas, New Mexico

Jurisdictions have most often purchased laptop computers for patrol cars with LLEBG funds, followed by desktop computers and a variety of software. Other equipment and technology expenditures funded by LLEBG are listed below:

- ❑ Light bar equipment for police cars, dashboard-mounted video cameras, and mobile video-recording systems for police cars.
- ❑ Mobile operations centers/mobile precincts, mobile crime laboratories, and forensic laboratories.
- ❑ Crime mapping systems, computer-aided dispatch systems, and records management information systems.

Crime Prevention

Crime prevention traditionally covers a wide range of activities, from measures to reduce conditions that breed criminal behavior and citizen vulnerability to crime to programs that boost neighborhood unity. Many aspects of school security programs such as graffiti removal, substance-abuse treatment associated with drug courts, and joint ventures sponsored by multijurisdictional task forces can fall within the general concept of crime prevention. Thus, although LLEBG funds used in crime prevention have hovered around 10 percent of total grant allocations since 1996, the scope of actual crime prevention activities could be considered far greater. In many states, for example, small grants have supported new crime prevention

programs for young children, teenagers, and elderly citizens. The following are examples of programs that have been funded through LLEBG:

- ❑ Police athletic leagues, outdoor camping programs for at-risk youth, and other police-youth recreational activities.
- ❑ Crime prevention programs for the elderly.
- ❑ Community centers offering academics, counseling, tutoring, computer and art courses, job training, and family intervention services.
- ❑ Community policing Web sites and other initiatives for hotspot neighborhoods and schools.
- ❑ Domestic violence assistance for Asian and Pacific Island refugee women and sexual assault and rape prevention.

School Security

The LLEBG funding allocations specifically aimed at school security decreased from 4.59 percent in 1996 to 3.28 percent in 1997 and 2.31 percent in 1998. However, many LLEBG-funded crime prevention projects have had significant implications for schools and students. Crime prevention efforts were conducted in cooperation with schools in which various prevention programs were located. With mounting public concern over violence in schools, BJA anticipates that a higher proportion of future LLEBG funds will be allocated to this category.

One of the most unusual uses of LLEBG school security grants involved demolition of some 200 buildings surrounding schools and child-care facilities in St. Louis, Missouri. Linked to criminal activity around the school grounds, the buildings were nominated for demolition by citizens, the board of education, building inspectors, and the police department. Following demolition, the city plans to focus on code enforcement and offer grants for home improvements.

Other examples of LLEBG-funded school security programs include the following:

- ❑ Graffiti removal.
- ❑ Drug and alcohol presentations to parents by experts.
- ❑ Adopt-a-Cop programs and foot patrols by police in schools and at bus stops.

- School resource officers to teach courses in anger management and conflict resolution and to act as liaisons with social service agencies.

Drug Courts

Unlike other purpose areas, drug court programs funded by LLEBG must satisfy several requirements, including providing substance-abuse treatment services for offenders and imposing legal sanctions for noncompliance. Over the past 3 years, jurisdictions have chosen to use approximately 3 percent of grant moneys on adult and juvenile drug courts. Many crime prevention initiatives include substance-abuse education and counseling in their programs, and several drug court programs have embraced a more comprehensive approach to substance-abuse treatment.

In Jacksonville, Florida, for example, the goal of local officials is addressing the needs of all juveniles involved in court proceedings, whether they are identified through delinquency or drug dependency or are children of parents who have a drug-related matter in the adult court. Examples of other drug court programs funded through LLEBG are as follows:

- Outpatient treatment services, including education programs, acupuncture, counseling, community-based treatment for adults and juveniles, intensive probation, and reinforced remedial education.
- Drug courts for nonviolent juvenile offenders.
- Long-term evaluations of county drug courts.
- An alcohol/drug alternative program for high-risk delinquents ages 14–18, which includes substance-abuse treatment, an academic environment, surveillance, counseling, and team sports.

Adjudication of Violent Offenders

There has been a slight decrease in the amount of LLEBG funds allocated to adjudicate violent offenders—from 4.43 percent in 1996 to 3.18 percent in 1998. However, several jurisdictions have used funds to mount intensive campaigns to reduce criminal violence. Most jurisdictions using LLEBG funds for adjudication of violent offenders are focusing on juveniles and especially gangs, which have increased significantly in some communities. In Stockton, California, for example, the police department identified 157 gangs and 3,688 gang members in 1996. To help process the influx

of cases involving violent juvenile offenders, juvenile sex offenders, and juveniles certified as adults, many jurisdictions spent their funds on hiring additional staff.

Across the country, LLEBG funds have been used to address violent offenders through a wide range of efforts, including the following:

- Establishing gang violence intervention units.
- Purchasing computer equipment, including case management systems with multiple components to track violent and repeat offender cases, and office equipment and supplies.
- Developing a court specialization program targeting violent offender cases.
- Supporting programs to gather, record, and disseminate information about gang members and violent juvenile offenders.
- Establishing police officer training for a program to identify drug dealers and close crack houses.
- Supporting Court Appointed Special Advocates, family court programs for parents and juveniles, community justice projects, and neighborhood mediation programs.
- Supporting juvenile diversion programs targeting young and first-time offenders, restorative justice programs for juveniles, and victim-offender mediation for juvenile cases.

Multijurisdictional Task Forces

Although very few jurisdictions allocated LLEBG funds directly to multijurisdictional task forces, many programs in the other purpose areas are characterized by partnerships and substantial interagency collaboration.

Among many collaborative efforts, LLEBG funds have supported a Multi-Agency Gang Enforcement Council, whose members include the county sheriff's department, the regional FBI office, the police department, and the U.S. Attorney's Office, and a community safety program focusing on domestic violence, drunk driving, drug abuse, gangs, sex offenses, and car theft.

In addition, LLEBG funds were instrumental in establishing a mobile computer terminal project that allows all of the jurisdictions within a county to share public safety information through a wireless network. This project also supported a covert operations response team that combats drug smuggling. The team comprises

state Coast Guard units, federal and state law enforcement officers, the National Guard, the U.S. Border Patrol, the U.S. Customs Service, state park and wildlife departments, county sheriffs' offices, and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Moreover, LLEBG funds supported a youth services unit that works to reduce conflict in schools among Native-American youth. This unit is a partnership of city and tribal police departments, the county sheriff's department, school officials, and city and tribal council representatives.

Conclusion

Now in its fourth year, the LLEBG Program is achieving the objectives established for it by Congress in 1995. Using streamlined procedures, thousands of communities across the nation have applied for and are receiving funding for reducing crime and improving public safety. New partnerships among police, sheriffs, neighborhood residents, students, community members, teachers, and social service professionals have been created and, in many cases, are expanding. Hundreds of jurisdictions have modernized their information management and communications systems, improving services and community relations in the process.

David L. Kurz, Chief of Police, Durham, New Hampshire, noted that the energy and commitment of his community are not lacking, but funding is. According to Kurz, if not for the LLEBG funds, many of his departments goals would not be realized. "LLEBG is the catalyst moving this mission forward."

For More Information

For a more detailed description of the LLEBG Program's legislative requirements, see BJA's *Local Law Enforcement Block Grants Program Fact Sheet* and *Guidance Manual*. Both documents are available by visiting the BJA Web site or by calling the BJA Clearinghouse.

Bureau of Justice Assistance

810 Seventh Street NW.

Washington, DC 20531

202-514-5947

World Wide Web: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA

Bureau of Justice Assistance Clearinghouse

P.O. Box 6000

Rockville, MD 20849-6000

1-800-688-4252

World Wide Web: www.ncjrs.org

Clearinghouse staff are available Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. eastern time. Ask to be placed on the BJA mailing list.

U.S. Department of Justice Response Center

1-800-421-6770 or 202-307-1480

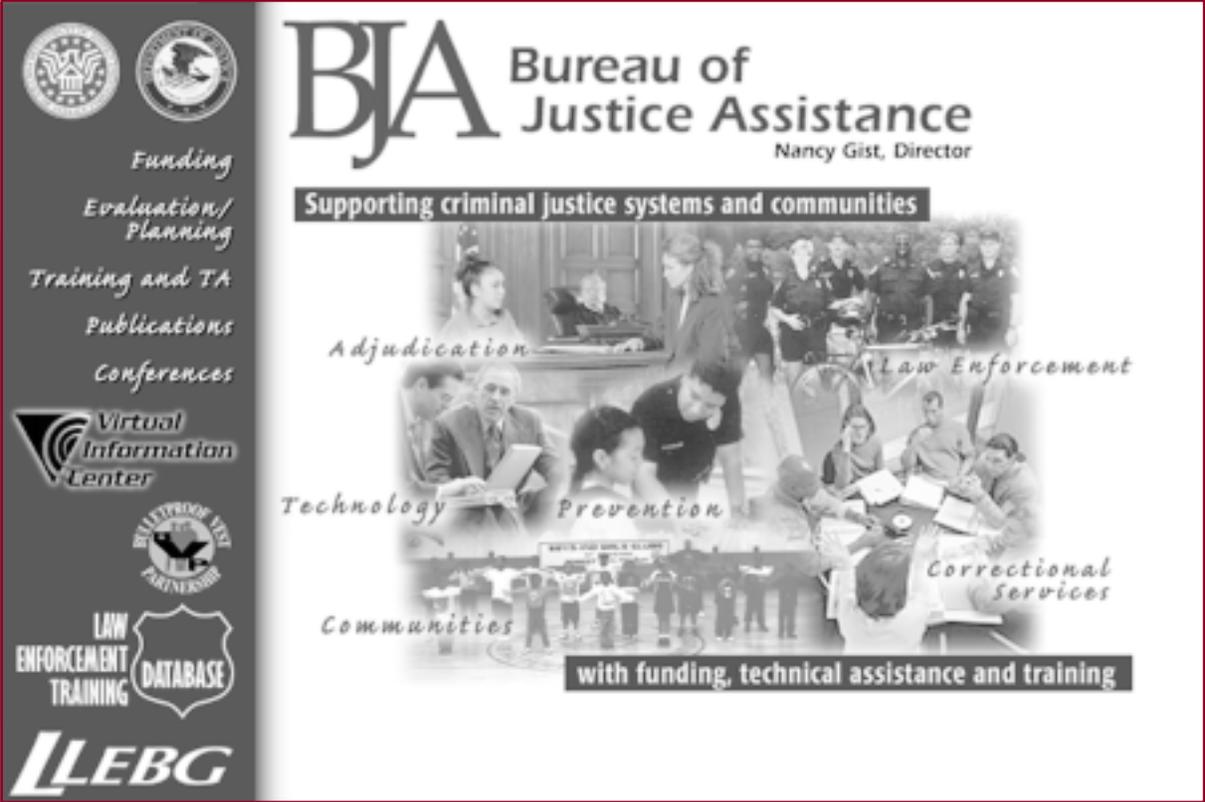
Response Center staff are available Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. eastern time.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

NCJ 179982
April 2000

Visit the *new* BJA Web site for easy access to the criminal justice information you need.

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA



The image is a promotional banner for the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). On the left side, there is a vertical dark grey bar containing several logos and text: the Department of Justice seal, the Department of Education seal, the text "Funding", "Evaluation/Planning", "Training and TA", "Publications", and "Conferences", the "Virtual Information Center" logo, the "DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP" logo, the "LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING DATABASE" logo, and the "LEBG" logo. The main part of the banner features the BJA logo and the text "Bureau of Justice Assistance" with "Nancy Gist, Director" below it. A central black box contains the text "Supporting criminal justice systems and communities". Below this is a collage of images showing people in various settings: a courtroom, law enforcement officers, people working at computers, and a group of people in a meeting. Labels "Adjudication", "Law Enforcement", "Technology", "Prevention", and "Correctional Services" are overlaid on the collage. At the bottom, another black box contains the text "with funding, technical assistance and training".