

**PAUL COVERDELL NATIONAL FORENSIC SCIENCES
IMPROVEMENT ACT: INFORMATION MEMORANDUM FOR
FISCAL YEAR 2003**

MEMORANDUM State Administering Agency Directors
TO: State Administering Agency Contacts

FROM: Lisa Forman, Ph.D.
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National Institute of Justice
U.S. Department of Justice

SUBJECT: Paul Coverdell National Forensic Sciences
Improvement Act (NFSIA) Grants

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*****NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS*****

1. **The National Forensic Sciences Improvement Act (NFSIA) provides funds through a two-part grant program consisting of formula and discretionary portions.**
 - a. The formula grant program provides funding through State Administering Agencies (SAAs) to every State, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Under the formula program, NIJ anticipates funding every State and Territory that applies through its SAA and meets the required elements of the NFSIA program. Each State and Territory is eligible for funding based on the size of its population. A list of State Administering Agencies (SAAs) can be found at the following Web site: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/state.htm>.
 - b. **The discretionary portion of this program will be announced in a separate solicitation also posted on the NIJ Web site.** The discretionary program provides funding to eligible States, Territories, and units of local government that have above-average rates of part-one violent crimes, as reported to the FBI by that State or Territory and published in the Uniform Crime Reports. Discretionary funds will be competitively awarded. See the discretionary funding solicitation for your State's eligibility to compete for these funds.

If you would like to speak with someone at the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) about this announcement, please call the Program Manager, Lisa Forman, Ph.D., at 202–307–6608 or Nick Viggiani at 202–307–5847.

2. You MUST apply online for Fiscal Year 2003 NFSIA funding.

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) requires that you submit your application for funding through OJP's Web-based Grants Management System (GMS). Access through the Internet to this online application system will expedite and streamline the receipt, review, and processing of your request for funding. No other applications will be accepted. To learn how to begin your online application process, please see Section V—FY 2003 Online Application Process—of this application kit. Call toll free to receive technical assistance about the online application process at 888–549–9901.

I. NFSIA Grant Program Appropriations

On February 20, 2003, President Bush signed the Consolidated Appropriations Resolution of 2003, covering the U.S. Department of Justice's programs for Fiscal Year (FY) 2003. This bill provides \$5 million for funding the NFSIA grants. NFSIA authorizes funding to improve the quality, timeliness, and credibility of forensic science services for criminal justice purposes. The formula funding allocation table can be found in [Section VI](#) of this announcement.

All States and Territories may apply for formula funding. These States and Territories must apply through their State Administering Agency (SAA) via the Office of Justice Programs Web-based Grants Management System (GMS). However, only certain States and Territories are eligible for **both** formula **and** discretionary funding. (See the discretionary funding solicitation, also posted on [NIJ's Web site](#), for funding eligibility). **Units of local government** from discretionary eligible States may apply to receive a discretionary award. Discretionary funds will be competitively awarded, and applications are not required to be sent through the State Administering Agency (SAA).

Example for units of local government: *If you are a unit of local government from Florida, and you wish to receive NFSIA formula funding, you must contact your State Administering Agency (SAA) and inquire about being included in your State's NFSIA formula application. If you are a unit of local government from Florida and you wish to apply for discretionary funding, you may respond to the separate discretionary funding solicitation and apply directly to NIJ—not your SAA—since Florida is a discretionary-eligible State. If you are a unit of local government from a State that is not eligible for discretionary funding, you may **not** apply for discretionary funding.*

II. Program Description

In general, the NFSIA program provides funding to crime laboratories and medical examiners' offices based on population and crime statistics. The program permits funding for expenses related to facilities, personnel, computerization, equipment, supplies, accreditation, certification, education, and training. NFSIA requires that States and Territories receiving a grant under the program use the award to carry out all or a substantial part of a program to improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science or medical examiner services in the State. Included are services provided by laboratories or medical examiner's offices operated by the State and those operated by units of local government within the State. Funds **may not** be used for any general law enforcement or nonforensic investigatory function.

III. Required Elements of the Program

NFSIA requires that the State or Territory applying for funding submit a certification that the State or Territory has developed a coordinated State plan for forensic science or medical examiner laboratories. The plan should specifically describe how the proposed funding would improve the quality or timeliness of forensic science or medical examiner services in the State or Territory. This State plan should be attached to the application. This program does not require State matching funds.

Applications for formula funding must be submitted through the designated State Administering Agency (SAA). Since the funds received through NFSIA are to be used to improve the quality, timeliness, and credibility of forensic science services for criminal justice purposes, NIJ requires certification that the State or Territory has either:

A. An established forensic science laboratory or laboratory system that:

Employs one or more full-time scientists whose principal duties are the examination of physical evidence in criminal matters for law enforcement agencies and who provide testimony to the criminal justice system with respect to such physical evidence examinations.

Employs generally accepted practices and procedures, as established by appropriate accrediting organizations.

Is accredited by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors-Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD-LAB), the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME), or other appropriate certifying bodies, or will use a portion of the grant amount to prepare and apply for such accreditation by not later than 2 years after the date a grant is initially awarded.

Or:

B. A medical examiner's office (as defined by the National Association of Medical Examiners) that:

Employs generally accepted practices and procedures, as established by appropriate accrediting organizations.

Is accredited by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors-Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD-LAB), the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME), or other appropriate certifying bodies, or will use a portion of the grant amount to prepare and apply for such accreditation by not later than 2 years after the date a grant is initially awarded.

Applicants are encouraged to assess all aspects of forensic evidence examination—from crime scene through laboratory analysis—to identify bottlenecks and general inefficiencies that could be alleviated with NFSIA funds. The result of NFSIA funding should be a demonstrated improvement over current operations in the average number of days between submission of a sample to a forensic science laboratory and the delivery of test results to the requesting office or agency.

IV. Allocation, Restrictions, and Limitations on Use of Funds

After a Congressionally enacted rescission of 0.65 percent, a total of \$4,967,500 is available for the NFSIA program for Fiscal Year 2003. Award amounts are predetermined according to the allocation criteria set forth in 42 U.S.C. § 37971 [section 2803(a)] for each fiscal year. Because funding distribution is based on fiscal year allocation, grant eligibility for all States will expire at the end of the 2003 fiscal year. Therefore, States and units of local government that do not qualify, or that choose not to submit an application for the FY2003 NFSIA program by the **June 30, 2003**, deadline, will not be eligible to receive funds under the Fiscal Year 2003 program. Allocation criteria set forth in 42 U.S.C. § 37971 [section 2803(a)] are as follows:

Formula Grant: Population-based Allocation

Seventy-five percent (\$3,725,625) of the total amount made available to carry out the program shall be allocated to each State that meets the required elements of the program, so that each State receives an amount based on population statistics. (See [Section VI](#) of this announcement.)

The following examples may be considered when developing applications. These examples are not meant to be inclusive, but rather may be used for guidance when assessing needs and determining the best approach for enhancing overall efficiency and productivity.

Expenditures from the population allocation may include the following:

- **Laboratory and Computer Equipment:** Under this category, NFSIA funds may be used for: upgrading, replacing, and purchasing laboratory equipment, instrumentation, and computer hardware or software for forensic analyses and data management; automation or semi-automation of analytical tasks currently performed manually (e.g., robotics, auto-samplers to laboratory instrumentation, expert systems); replacement of manual documentation and record keeping processes with automated or electronic systems (e.g., bar code labeling of evidence, Laboratory Information Management Systems); outsourcing analytical or relevant administrative or quality assurance and quality control tasks (e.g., equipment calibration) where outsourcing can be shown to improve efficiency or economy; or, upgrading analytical instrumentation, computer equipment, or software to allow faster, more robust analyses or provide improved abilities to import data or interface with other systems.
- **Supplies:** NFSIA funds may be used to acquire laboratory supplies for analyses and validation studies, and for other expenses directly attributable to forensic analyses. Funds may be used for purchasing instrumentation or computer equipment to increase concurrent analytical or data analyses; purchasing additional frequently used items (e.g., pipettors, microscopes, hoods) to reduce delay in performing essential parts of the testing process; purchasing improved or upgraded test kits, reagents, or other supplies or support items that will allow increasingly comprehensive or discriminatory information to be obtained from evidentiary samples; and implementing methods that will more thoroughly or efficiently screen evidentiary items to locate probative samples for subsequent laboratory analysis (e.g., alternate light source).
- **Personnel:** Although NFSIA funds may not be used for salaries and or wages for State and local personnel, funds may be used for costs associated with personnel, such as overtime, fellowships, visiting scientists, interns, consultants, or contracted staff.
- **Facilities:** NFSIA funds may be used for the construction or renovation of facilities that will improve the effectiveness or efficiency of forensic laboratory operation. For example, benches, cabinets, interior dividing walls, evidence

storage rooms, or extraction rooms can be funded when it can be demonstrated that such construction will improve the efficiency of the laboratory. Funds may also be used for facilities construction, including short-term and long-term evidence storage facilities, amplification rooms, evidence examination and preparation rooms, drying rooms, walk-in freezers, ballistic test ranges, etc.

- **Accreditation and Certification:** NFSIA funds may be used, in whole or in part, to prepare and apply for accreditation by ASCLD-LAB, NAME, or other appropriate certifying bodies by not later than 2 years after the date on which a grant is initially awarded. It is further expected that applicants seeking certification and accreditation will remedy any deficiencies obstructing certification or accreditation within 1 year of notification of the deficiencies.
- **Education and Training:** NFSIA funds may be used for appropriate internal and external training and continuing education/training opportunities as they relate to maintaining appropriate accreditation. Funds may also be used to increase the number of fully trained analysts while minimizing use of existing personnel resources for training support. The application should demonstrate that the training is directly applicable to the job position and duties of the individual(s) receiving the training.

Note: Not more than ten percent (10 percent) of the total amount of a grant awarded under this program may be used for administrative expenses.

If NFSIA funds are to be used to construct a new facility, a specific description of that facility must be submitted as an appendix of the application, and must include estimated costs and a certification that the amount of the grant used for the costs of the facility will not exceed the following limitations:

States receiving the minimum grant amount, \$29,805 (0.6 percent of the total amount made available for this fiscal year—\$4,967,500), shall not use more than 80 percent of the total amount of the population-based allocation for the cost of any new facility constructed as a part of this program. States receiving grants that exceed \$29,805 shall not use more than 80 percent of this amount, and not more than 40 percent of the amount of the grant in excess of this amount for the costs of any new facility construction. For example, if your State is eligible for \$100,000 under the population-based allocation and you wish to use a portion of the grant for facility construction, the following calculation would be used:

$$\begin{aligned} \$29,805 \times .80 &= \mathbf{\$23,844} \\ \$100,000 - \$29,805 &= \$70,195 \\ \$70,195 \times .40 &= \mathbf{\$28,078} \\ \$23,844 + \$28,078 &= \mathbf{\$51,922} \text{ can be used for facility construction.} \end{aligned}$$

V. **Fiscal Year 2003 Application Process**

Formula Funding Applications (States and Territories Only)

Requests from eligible States and Territories for formula funding must be submitted through State Administering Agencies (SAAs) via the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Grants Management System (GMS). Each State or Territory submitting an application for formula funding that meets the conditions and requirements of the program will receive an award based on the population of that State or Territory. (See [Section VI](#) of this announcement for population-based allocation information.)

How to Apply

You must submit your application(s) through OJP's automated **Grants Management System (GMS)**, an online system accessible through the Internet. It is intended to expedite and streamline the receipt, review, and processing of applications. We will accept your final application only through the online GMS application system. Call the GMS Hotline toll-free to receive technical assistance about the online application process: 1-888-549-9901. You may access the GMS Hotline Monday through Friday between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m. eastern time. To use the GMS system, complete the following steps:

Step 1.

On the Internet, go to <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/fundopps.htm>. Here, you may link directly to OJP's Grants Management System (GMS). An online **GMS Application Procedures Handbook** is also available on this page. We strongly encourage you to review this handbook before beginning your GMS electronic application, as it includes step-by-step instructions for the application process.

Step 2.

Select "**Logon Directly to the Grants Management System (GMS)**" to apply for grant funding.

Step 3.

If you have not previously used GMS, click on "**New User? Register Here**" and follow the on-screen instructions to register with GMS. After you register, select "**NFSIA Formula FY 2003**" for formula grant applications and "**NFSIA Discretionary FY 2003**" for discretionary applications. (See [Section III—Eligibility](#)—to determine your eligibility for discretionary funding.)

If you are not a new user and have a GMS password, click on "**Login**." If your password has expired, an "Authentication Error" or "Unauthorized User" message will appear on the screen. In this case, click on "Having Login Problems?" for assistance in updating your password.

Please Note: Applicants must ensure that the information about the authorizing official and the alternate contact is entered correctly. The authorizing official is the individual authorized to accept grant funds in your organization (e.g., executive director, attorney general, governor). If the individual applying online is not the signing authority, that individual *must* list the authorizing official's name and contact information where appropriate.

Step 4.

Complete the online application, including the three required file attachments: Budget Detail Worksheet, Program Narrative, and Other Program Attachments (other forms required by NIJ). See below for details on creating each of these attachments. After you submit the final application, the online system will inform you that the application has been received and sent to NIJ. The GMS system will provide an application identification number for future reference.

Note: It is OJP's practice to accept documents through GMS and to consider the entire submission to be under the GMS applicant's online, electronically signed,

submission of the grant application package. Thus, signatures are not required on forms included in Other Program Attachments.

If you have questions about GMS or need technical assistance with applying online, contact the **GMS Hotline at 1-888-549-9901, Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. eastern time** (except Federal holidays).

Required Forms and Documents

Individuals interested in submitting proposals in response to this announcement must complete the required application forms and related documents. You will complete some of the forms shown as part of the development of your user profile during the GMS online application process; others must be attached to your application file on GMS (**GMS will not accept zip files or executable files**). **Note:** Proposals containing maps, tables, digital photos, and other types of graphics will produce large file sizes that may affect the speed of electronic transfer. Please take this into consideration when submitting your proposal online.

Please use the "Checklist for Application" at http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/checklist_for_application.pdf to ensure that your application is complete.

National Environmental Policy Act Requirement. All award recipients must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (Public Law 91-190, codified at 42 U.S.C. § 4321 et seq.). To ensure NEPA compliance, NIJ may require some award recipients to submit additional information.

Program Narrative. The program narrative addresses the project objectives, the expected results, and the implementation approach. The program narrative must specifically describe how expenditures of grant funds will augment the implementation or utility of the consolidated State forensic science plan. The program narrative should also demonstrate, specifically and comprehensively, how requested funds will improve laboratory efficiency and productivity *over current operations*. The program narrative must not exceed 30 double-spaced pages, no matter the amount of funding.

Proposal Abstract. The proposal abstract is a very important part of the application. When read separately from the rest of the application, the abstract should serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work. Applicants should concisely describe project goals and objectives, project plans, and methods for achieving the goals. Once an award has been granted, the abstract is computerized and serves as a summary available to all interested parties for the duration of the grant.

Due Date. Complete proposals must be submitted through the online GMS application system by 9 p.m. eastern time on **June 30, 2003**. Extensions to this deadline are not permitted. **NIJ will not accept faxed or mailed proposals**, NIJ reserves the right to reject incomplete applications, those not responsive to the scope of this announcement, or those not complying with format requirements.

Guidance and Information. Applicants who want additional guidance and information may contact the U.S. Department of Justice Response Center at 800-421-6770. Center staff can provide assistance or refer applicants to an appropriate NIJ professional. Applicants who have questions about GMS or need technical assistance with applying online can contact the **GMS Hotline at 1-888-549-9901, Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. eastern time** (except Federal holidays).

Confidentiality of information and human subjects protection. NIJ has adopted new policies and procedures regarding the confidentiality of information and human subjects protection. Details on the requirements are available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/humansubjects/index.html>. (NFSIA projects do not usually involve activities that fall within the purview of privacy and human subjects rules and regulations. You may, however, still consider reading these policies and procedures in order to determine if your planned activities fall within these rules).

Record Maintenance and Access. Each State or local unit of government within the State that receives funding under this program will maintain records relating to the receipt and use of the total grant amount. The Attorney General and the Comptroller General of the United States (or designee thereof) will have access to these records for audit and examination purposes.

Reporting Requirement. NFSIA requires each State that receives a grant to submit a report within 180 days of the end of the award period. The report will include a summary and assessment of the program carried out with the grant, and will cite the average number of days between submission of a sample to a forensic science laboratory and delivery of test results to a requesting office or agency.

This requirement is in addition to other OJP grant reporting requirements. See the OJP Office of the Comptroller's "Post Award Instructions" Web page (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/oc/docs/PostAwardInstructions.pdf>) for more details.

Performance Measures. To ensure compliance with the Government Performance and Results Act (Public Law 103-62), this solicitation notifies applicants that NIJ's performance under this solicitation is measured by the number of forensic labs with improved analytic and technological resources. Award recipients will be required to collect and report data in support of this measure.

Award Period. In general, NIJ limits its grants under this program to a maximum period of 12 months.

Number of Awards. NIJ anticipates supporting every State and Territory that submits an application that meets the required elements of the program and follows the guidelines for limitations and restrictions for use of funds.

Award Amount. Awards totaling \$4,967,500 will be made available for this NIJ program. Of this amount, \$3,725,625 will be available for the formula program and \$1,241,875 will be available for the discretionary program.

VI. **Formula Program: Population-Based Funding Allocation**

	Population Award (\$)
Alabama	54,557
Alaska	29,805
Arizona	66,351
Arkansas	32,955
California	427,018
Colorado	54,801

Connecticut	42,080
Delaware	29,805
District of Columbia	29,805
Florida	203,236
Georgia	104,094
Hawaii	29,805
Idaho	29,805
Illinois	153,226
Indiana	74,895
Iowa	35,712
Kansas	33,026
Kentucky	49,771
Louisiana	54,509
Maine	29,805
Maryland	66,373
Massachusetts	78,164
Michigan	122,216
Minnesota	61,041
Mississippi	34,921
Missouri	68,980
Montana	29,805
Nebraska	29,805
Nevada	29,805
New Hampshire	29,805
New Jersey	104,460
New Mexico	29,805
New York	232,960
North Carolina	101,175
North Dakota	29,805
Ohio	138,885
Oklahoma	42,484
Oregon	42,822
Pennsylvania	149,997
Rhode Island	29,805
South Carolina	49,944

South Dakota	29,805
Tennessee	70,496
Texas	264,848
Utah	29,805
Vermont	29,805
Virginia	88,691
Washington	73,800
West Virginia	29,805
Wisconsin	66,166
Wyoming	29,805
AS/CNMI	29,805
AS	17,883
CNMI	11,922
Guam	29,805
Puerto Rico	44,189
Virgin Islands	29,805
FY 2003 Award Amount	3,725,625
FY 2002 Unawarded	189,122
Total to be Awarded	3,914,747