Notice: NIJ continues to experience delays in delivery of U.S. mail. If you are sending time-sensitive materials to NIJ, and in particular proposals responding to NIJ solicitations, we recommend that you use an alternative to the U.S. Postal Service. For delivery by commercial carriers and courier services, our zip code is 20001.

APPLICATION DEADLINE:
February 10, 2003
Drug Court Evaluation

I. Introduction

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) in cooperation with the Office of Justice Programs Drug Courts Program Office (DCPO) requests proposals to conduct an offender-based, longitudinal research project to evaluate the impact of participation in a drug court program on post-program behavior. The research will be conducted at up to 10 adult drug courts, which will be sampled from among all drug courts that have received DCPO funding and been in operation for at least 24 months. A single award of up to $5 million, including both direct and indirect costs, will be made, subject to appropriations. The grant will be administered through a cooperative agreement with NIJ. The proposed project period should not exceed 5 years, including an implementation and planning phase of up to 1 year at the beginning of the project. The project period must also include 90 days at the end of the project for NIJ review and revision of final products.

The grantee shall provide NIJ with annual oral and/or written reports of interim findings over the duration of the grant.

Research subjects must include both a sample of drug court participants and a comparison group. Participants must be followed through the court program and for at least 1 year following their exit from the program, either through graduation or termination, while comparison subjects should be followed for the equivalent time period.

Funding will be awarded in two phases to allow initial support for an implementation phase to hire staff, expand institutional capacity, select sites, and establish access. Supplemental funding for technical assistance to assist selected sites in developing the ability to collect the required data for this study will be considered on a case-by-case basis. While a budget for the entire project should be proposed, applications should present the budget for the implementation phase and for phase two separately. Of course, some costs in the second phase will be estimates; these can be adjusted when the budget for phase two is revised, based on the known sites for the study.

Funding under this solicitation may be awarded to a single research agency or to a collaborative effort among agencies. NIJ encourages researchers from all disciplines to explore opportunities for such collaborations. If a collaborative effort is proposed, the application should provide a management plan identifying which agency will be the primary grantee responsible for overseeing the entire project and include a detailed outline of the responsibilities of each participating agency. The budgets for each agency should be combined to show the total expenditures for the project on the Budget Detail Worksheet. The budgets for each separate collaborating agency should be shown in the budget narrative.

II. Background

This solicitation addresses Section 2209 in Part V, Title V, of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 that specifically states that the Attorney General may make arrangements for evaluations of drug court programs that receive grant support from the Office of Justice Programs (OJP).

DCPO has funded over 500 drug courts since 1995. The proposed research for this project should be based on a sample of these courts, and the method of selection must be discussed in the proposal. A complete list of DCPO-funded drug courts is included in the appendix.

Since 1996, NIJ and DCPO have cooperatively funded extensive evaluations in 4 adult drug courts, a review of 14 drug courts funded in 1995 and 1996, 6 juvenile drug courts, and several other research projects involving cost benefits, analysis of
treatment variations, and other single issue research projects.

This solicitation will build upon these previous efforts by seeking a longitudinal evaluation of selected DCPO-funded drug courts with a consistent method of analysis across the selected programs that includes a number of court characteristics. Further information on recent research on drug courts can be found in “Research on Drug Courts: A Critical Review 2001 Update” by Steven Belenko (The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, June 2001) and “Drug Court Publication Resource Guide” (National Drug Court Institute, Alexandria, VA 2000). A list of drug courts can be found in “Better DOJ Data Collection and Evaluation Efforts Needed to Measure Impact of Drug Courts” (General Accounting Office, Washington, DC, 2002). The list of adult drug courts provided in the appendix to this solicitation was adapted from the General Accounting Office report.

III. Partnerships Encouraged

NIJ strongly encourages partnerships between researchers and practitioners during all phases of research projects. Proposals should include plans for the formation of a standing panel of subject matter experts with experience in the criminal justice field to provide ongoing advice to the project. One of the primary roles of this panel will be to assist the project in defining issues of greatest interest to the field, and proposals should include concrete plans for the dissemination of research results to practitioners.

Among the products expected from the research funded under this solicitation, in addition to any research reports issued by the agency or through peer-reviewed journals, will be a series of brief topical reports or research bulletins designed for policy and practitioner audiences that are clear, concise, and readable. The topics and format of these products will be developed through the structure of the cooperative agreement with NIJ.

Any of these products intended for NIJ publication will be externally peer reviewed. Applications should provide in their budget plans for editorial staff to assist in the preparation of these products.

IV. Areas of Research Required

The research design for the proposed project will include plans for the selection of a sample of up to 10 adult drug courts that have received funding from DCPO and been in operation for at least 24 months. The focus of the research will be to determine whether the selected courts have accomplished their overall goal of reducing recidivism among the population served and determining the relative costs and benefits of drug courts.

The sample will be developed in consultation with NIJ during the implementation phase of the project. Relevant factors to be considered in selecting sites include the size of the court’s caseload; variations in the type of court, such as whether it is a diversion program versus a post-conviction program; eligibility requirements, recruitment, and whether participation is voluntary; the characteristics of the target population; and geographic region.

At each selected site, samples of drug-involved offenders will be selected and tracked. Research designs using random assignment of subjects is strongly encouraged, but not required under this solicitation. Drug court program participants will be followed through their entire experience with that court program and for at least 1 year after the end of their supervision. A comparison group of offenders who do not participate in the drug court program will also be identified and followed for the equivalent time period. Over-sampling of some groups may be considered to assure a sufficient number of individuals in the identified categories of interest. It is anticipated that the participant and comparison groups should yield up to 400 research subjects per site.

Data will be collected from interviews with offenders and from official records. The interviews
will target the critical set of measures in demographic and social background, criminal history, alcohol and other drug use histories, workforce participation, education, and offense characteristics. Existing instruments, including the instruments currently used in the ADAM program, will serve as a model.

Relevant program outcomes measured from official records and self-reports will include program completion or expulsion, recidivism for a new offense, revocation of probation, relapse, and other social, educational and vocational adjustment measures. Process measures will include characteristics of the court in that jurisdiction, not just the drug court, including costs, personnel, structure, operation, and legal culture.

Applicants should discuss in detail their institutional capacities to manage a data collection effort involving multiple sites and repeated measures. Included should be a discussion of quality control methods and plans for tracking subjects in both the participant and comparison groups during follow-up periods to keep sample attrition to less than 25 percent during the project.

Applicants should discuss plans to address issues of missing data. Proposals under this solicitation should also include an outline for the eventual analysis of the data, including plans for some form of survival analyses. Proposals should also discuss analysis plans which anticipate the influence of selection bias on results and suggest strategies for addressing the issue.

As noted above, applicants should build into their plans an implementation phase of up to 1 year to expand institutional capacity, select the sites, establish access, and assist the selected sites in developing the ability to collect the required data. Careful monitoring of these milestones will be the responsibility of NIJ.

During the implementation phase, requests for supplemental funding to provide technical assistance to selected sites in developing the ability to collect the required data for this study will be considered. Such funding will only be available to aid sites in building the capacity to provide the necessary data for this project and not to develop local management information systems for other purposes. The funding will be provided directly to the site and will be made available on a case-by-case basis.

V. Selection Criteria

NIJ is firmly committed to a competitive process in making grant awards. External peer review panelists consider both technical and programmatic merits of a proposed topic. Successful applicants must demonstrate to an independent peer review panel that: (1) the proposed project is responsive to all of the required areas of research, as defined in Section II above, will produce knowledge directly relevant to policy at the national level, and can enhance our understanding of crime and justice; (2) the proposed research design is rigorous and appropriate to posited research questions; and, (3) principal investigators are highly qualified and have the institutional capacity to execute a national, longitudinal study of the scale required by this solicitation.

Following the review by the peer panel, Institute staff make recommendations to the NIJ Director based on the results of those reviews and internal deliberations. Final decisions are made by the NIJ Director. Reviews of grant applications are based upon the following criteria:

#Impact of the Project

**S** Relevance in informing the policy and practice of drug courts and the criminal justice system generally for improving public safety, security, and quality of life.

**S** Potential for significant advances of understanding in areas such as the management of drug-involved offenders, the operation of drug courts, crime prevention, and the relationship of drugs and crime.
Solicitation

Quality and Technical Merit

S Awareness of existing research literature and relevant theoretical perspectives on substance abuse treatment and relapse, therapeutic jurisprudence, and court operations.
S Soundness of methodology, analytics, or technical approach.
S Innovativeness and creativity in the treatment of the research topic or methodology.
S Feasibility of proposed project, awareness of potential problems, and suggested solutions.

Capabilities, Demonstrated Productivity, and Experience of Applicants

S Qualifications and experience of personnel to proposed project.
S Demonstrated institutional capacity to carry out a multisite study on a national scale.
S Demonstrated ability to manage the proposed effort.
S Adequacy of proposed budget including time and personnel.
S Past performance on NIJ grants and contracts.

Budget Considerations

P Total cost relative to perceived benefit.
P Budget appropriate to level of effort.
P Use of existing resources to conserve costs.

The review process (including peer review, decisionmaking, and other considerations) may take up to 6 months to complete. Notices of award and nonaward are distributed simultaneously no later than 180 days subsequent to the closing date of a solicitation. Notifications will be sent to the address as indicated on the Application for Assistance. Information regarding award status will not be available until notifications are distributed.

VI. How to Apply

Individuals interested in submitting proposals in response to this solicitation must complete the required application forms and related documents. Applicants must include all of the following information and completed forms in order to qualify for consideration. Applicants should follow the page limit and format guidelines and include each of the items in the order they are listed below:

PART A:

- Application for Federal Assistance—Standard Form (SF 424).
- Proposal abstract.
- Table of contents.
- Budget Detail Worksheet.
- Budget narrative.
- Negotiated indirect rate agreement (if appropriate).
- Program narrative.
- Bibliography.
- Names and affiliations of all key persons including applicants and subcontractor(s), advisors, consultants, and advisory board members. Include name of principal investigator, title, organizational affiliation, department (if institution of higher education), address, phone, fax, and e-mail address.
- List all previous and current NIJ awards and grant numbers including information on final reports and other deliverables to NIJ (whether submitted or outstanding) and a listing of all publications (by NIJ or other publishers) resulting from each grant award.

PART B:

- Privacy certificate.
- Protection of Human Subjects Assurance Identification/Certification/Declaration (Form 310).
- Environmental assessment (if required).
- Geographic Areas Affected Worksheet.
- Assurances.
- Certifications Regarding Lobbying, Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters; and Drug-Free Workplace Requirements (one form).
- Disclosure of lobbying activities.
• Letters of cooperation from organizations collaborating in the research project.
• Resumes (limit lists of publications, presentations, and projects to those relevant to the topic of the proposal)
• Other materials necessary for the evaluation of the proposal.

The Application Package is available at the NIJ Web site under the URL:


The Application for Assistance. The Standard Form 424 should be the first page of the application. Please follow the instructions in completing the Standard Application for Assistance Form.

In item 10 of the Application, be sure to include 16.560 as the Catalog for Federal Domestic Assistance Number. Indicate the Title to be the “Drug Court Evaluation, 2002.”

Enter the title descriptive of your project in item 11. Start and end dates in item 13 should be adjusted to accommodate up to 6 months to review the proposals and process awards. For this solicitation, proposed projects should have a start date no earlier than September 10, 2003.

The Proposal Abstract. A 400-word proposal abstract should be the second page of the application package and concisely describe research objectives, design, and methodology. If an award is made, the abstract is computerized and serves as a publically available summary of the project for the duration of the grant. The abstract should clearly state the objectives of the proposed research project and its anticipated relevance to criminal justice policy and practice.

The abstract should be a succinct description of the proposed work and briefly describe the research design and methodology, data collection procedures and instrumentation, and other methods or procedures unique to the proposed study. The abstract should also note proposed techniques for data analysis and expected products including interim and final reports, instrumentation, and data to be archived under NIJ’s Data Resource Program.

The Program Narrative. The program narrative should provide information and detail to adequately describe the proposed project and should include:

• Purpose, goals, and objectives
• Brief review of relevant literature
• Methodology
• Anticipated results and products
• Staff/management plan
• Tables, charts, figures, and research timeline (not within page limit)

Page limit. The number of pages included in the “Program Narrative” section of the application must not exceed 30 double-spaced pages in 12-point font, with one-inch margins. Tables, charts and figures describing the research design, calendar, analysis plan, and similar items are encouraged and will not be counted in the page limitation.

Due date. 10 copies (and at least one unbound) of complete proposals must be received at the National Institute of Justice by 4:30 p.m. on the closing date of the solicitation. No extension of this deadline will be granted. Faxed or electronically transmitted copies are not accepted. NIJ reserves the right to return incomplete applications, those not responsive to the scope of this solicitation, or those not complying with format requirements.

Names and affiliations of the author(s) of the proposal should be clearly identified. Proposals that are incorrectly collated, incomplete, or handwritten may be considered as submitted or, at NIJ’s discretion, may be returned without further review. Proposals exceeding the page limit will not be reviewed. No additions to the original submission are allowed.

Application Materials. Applicants should obtain two packets: (1) application forms (including a sample budget worksheet); and, (2) guidelines for submitting proposals (including requirements for
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proposal writers and requirements for grant recipients. To receive them, applicants can:

• Access NIJ Web site and download application information at:
  

• Request hard copies of the forms and guidelines by mail from NCJRS 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.

Please note that instructions provided in this announcement supersede those outlined in the document: Guidelines for Submitting Proposals for National Institute of Justice—Sponsored Research.

VII. Performance Guidelines

To ensure compliance with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), Public Law 103-62, the solicitation notifies successful applicants that they will be required to collect and report data that measures the results of the grant. To ensure accountability, the following performance standards are established for all NIJ grantees under this solicitation. In addition to any products in the form of research reports, articles, and the series of brief topical reports or research bulletins mentioned above, by the end of the grant period, in accordance with established grant timelines, grantees will produce and submit to NIJ in draft form a 400-word abstract, a concise summary of the project, a final technical report, and any data with supporting documentation from the project.

Grantees should use plain English in writing all grant products (See http://www.plainlanguage.gov for assistance). While NIJ recognizes that descriptions of research methodologies may necessarily involve some technical information, grantees should put this technical information in context for the nonresearcher.

Research & Evaluation Performance Standards

The grantee shall provide NIJ with annual oral and/or written reports of interim findings over the duration of the grant.

Deliverables Required 90 Days Before the Grant End Date

- Abstract (400 words)
- Project summary
- Technical report
- Data and supporting documentation

Each of these final deliverable products is an important part of NIJ’s efforts to disseminate the results of research and preserve each project’s contribution to building knowledge.

C Project abstract. The abstract may appear in NIJ publications as a way to call attention to noteworthy projects. The abstract should be a succinct description of the completed research and concisely describe the topic, methodology, and major findings.

C Project summary. This document should be suitable for distribution as a stand-alone document to a general audience of policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. It should discuss the background of the project, include an overview of the research design and procedures, and review the findings and discuss their relevance.

C Technical report. This document is intended to convey a description of the research project in detail sufficient to allow other researchers to assess it independently and replicate the work. There is no limit on the length of the technical
report; researchers are encouraged to document their research project in detail, including presentation of data collections instruments, manuals, and other essential documentation.

C Data sets. Finally, grant recipients must submit, in a form appropriate for public access, all data sets used in producing the study and final report, together with whatever technical documentation is necessary to enable its use. Grantees should not enter into any agreements with research sites which preclude the release of the original research data.

All NIJ draft reports are peer reviewed upon submission. The reviews are forwarded to the principal investigator with suggestions for revisions. The principal investigator must submit the revised final abstract, project summary, technical report, and final data set with codebook/data dictionary by the end date of the grant. All documents must be submitted in both paper form and electronically. The data set and codebook/dictionary should be submitted in electronic form. The proposed budget for a project should anticipate and adequately address the costs associated with these requirements.

In addition to the above documents and data set, grantees must submit quarterly financial status reports and semiannual progress reports as described below.

Financial Status Report

Financial status reports (SF 269-A) are to be submitted quarterly no later than 45 days following the end of each calendar quarter. Two copies of the financial status report must be submitted to the Office of the Comptroller every quarter during which the award is active even if there has been no financial activity during the reporting period.

Additionally, a final financial report is due 120 days after the end date of the award. Future awards and fund drawdowns will be withheld if financial status reports are delinquent.

Semiannual Progress Report

Recipients of funding are also required to submit semiannual Categorical Assistance Progress Reports. Two copies of the progress report must be submitted to the Office of the Comptroller twice a year even if there has been no substantive activity during the reporting period. The progress report should describe activities during the reporting period and status or accomplishment of objectives as set forth in the approved application for funding. For the duration of the award, progress reports must be submitted within 30 days after the end of the reporting periods (January 1 through June 30 and July 1 through December 31).

Additionally, a Final Progress Report providing a summary of achievement of the goals and objectives of the award, significant results, and any products developed under the award, is due 90 days after the end date of the award. Future awards and fund drawdowns may be withheld if progress reports are delinquent.

Forms for submitting financial and progress reports are available at the NIJ Web site. Report formats will also be provided by the Office of Justice Programs at the time of the grant award.

Research Report

The final research report, due in draft form 90 days prior to the end of the grant, should provide a comprehensive overview of the study and should include a detailed description of the research design, data, and methods, a full presentation of scientific findings, and a thorough discussion of the implications of the research findings for criminal justice practice and policy.

Evaluation Report

For evaluation studies, the research report should also include a section on Measuring Program Performance. This section should outline the measures used to evaluate program effectiveness, modifications made to those measures as a result of
the evaluation, and recommendations regarding these and other potential performance measures for similar programs. (This information will be particularly valuable to NIJ and other federal program agencies in implementing performance measures for federally funded criminal justice programs).

Confidentiality of Information and Human Subject Protection

NIJ has adopted new policies and procedures regarding the confidentiality of information and human subjects protection.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) regulations at 28 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 22 require recipients of NIJ research funds to protect personally identifiable information that is collected from all research participants. The regulations at 28 CFR Part 22 require applicants for NIJ funding to outline specific procedures for protection of private information about individuals as part of the Privacy Certificate submitted with the application package.

In addition to the regulations in Part 22, DOJ has adopted policies concerning protection of human subjects which are the same as those established by the Department of Health and Human Services in 45 CFR Part 46, Subpart A, also known as the “Common Rule.”

The DOJ regulations are set forth in 28 CFR Part 46. In general, 28 CFR Part 46 requires that all research involving human subjects conducted or supported by a federal department or agency be reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) before federal funds are expended for that research. If IRB approval is required for this project, a copy of the IRB’s approval as well as supporting documentation concerning the IRB’s institutional affiliation, its policies and procedures, and necessary assurances must submitted to the National Institute of Justice prior to the initiation of any research activities that are not exempt from the provisions of 28 CFR Part 46.

Further information regarding Confidentiality and Human Subjects Protections may be found in Guidelines for Submitting Proposals for National Institute of Justice-Sponsored Research.

Guidance and information. Applicants who wish to receive 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.

Send completed forms to:

Drug Court Evaluation Solicitation
National Institute of Justice
810 Seventh Street N.W., Room 7324
Washington, DC 20531

Due to continuing delays in delivery of U.S. mail service to the U.S. Department of Justice, NIJ recommends the use of an overnight courier service (use ZIP Code 20001) or hand delivery for the submission of applications, which are due by 4:30 p.m. on the closing date of the solicitation.
Appendix

Adult drug courts that have received funding through the Drug Courts Program Office

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Solicitation

Maywood
Peoria
Rock Island
Rockford
St. Charles
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Indiana
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Evansville
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Kokomo
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For more information on the National Institute of Justice, please contact:

**National Criminal Justice Reference Service**
Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849–6000
800–851–3420
e-mail: askncjrs@ncjrs.org

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