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The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice is seeking applications for funding for social science research on the role and impact of forensic evidence on the criminal justice process. This program furthers the Department's mission by sponsoring research to provide objective, independent, evidence-based knowledge and tools to meet the challenges of crime and justice, particularly at the State and local levels.

# **Social Science Research on the Role and Impact of Forensic Evidence on the Criminal Justice Process**

## **Eligibility**

(See "Eligibility," page 3)

## **Deadline**

All applications are due by June 20, 2006.

## **Contact Information**

For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation, contact Katharine Browning, Social Science Analyst, 202-616-4786, [katharine.browning@usdoj.gov](mailto:katharine.browning@usdoj.gov)

This application must be submitted through Grants.gov. For technical assistance with submitting the application, call the Grants.gov Customer Support Hotline at 1-800-518-4726

**Grants.gov Funding Opportunity No. 2006-NIJ-1384**  
**SL# 000748**

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# **Social Science Research on the Role and Impact of Forensic Evidence on the Criminal Justice Process**

## **CFDA No. 16.560**

### **Overview**

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is the research, development, and evaluation agency of the U.S. Department of Justice and a component of the Office of Justice Programs (OJP). NIJ provides objective, independent, evidence-based knowledge and tools to enhance the administration of justice and public safety. NIJ solicits proposals to inform its search for the knowledge and tools to guide policy and practice.

Forensic evidence is an integral part of many criminal investigations, however there has been limited research on the impact of forensic evidence on the criminal justice system. NIJ is seeking proposals for social science research that evaluates the use of forensic evidence in the criminal justice system through the collection, analysis, and subsequent investigative and adjudicative processes. Findings from this study could influence policies on such issues as the allocation of resources and the training of laboratory and crime scene personnel.

### **Deadline: Registration**

The Grants.gov registration process can take one week or longer. If you have not previously registered with Grants.gov, please register early so that you can submit your proposal before the application deadline below.

### **Deadline: Application**

The due date for applying for funding under this announcement is **June 20, 2006**.

### **Eligibility**

In general, NIJ is authorized to make grants to, or enter into contracts or cooperative agreements with, States (including territories), local governments (including federally-recognized Indian tribal governments that perform law enforcement functions), nonprofit organizations, profit organizations, institutions of higher education, and qualified individuals. Foreign governments or organizations are not eligible to apply.

**Faith-Based and Other Community Organizations:** Consistent with President George W. Bush's Executive Order 13279, dated December 12, 2002, and 28 C.F.R. Part 38, it is DOJ policy that faith-based and other community organizations that statutorily qualify as eligible applicants under DOJ programs are invited and encouraged to apply for assistance awards to fund eligible grant activities. Faith-based and other community organizations will be considered for awards on the same basis as other eligible applicants and, if they receive assistance awards, will be treated on an equal basis with

all other grantees in the administration of such awards. No eligible applicant or grantee will be discriminated for or against on the basis of its religious character or affiliation, religious name, or the religious composition of its board of directors or persons working in the organization.

Faith-based organizations receiving DOJ assistance awards retain their independence and do not lose or have to modify their religious identity (e.g., removing religious symbols) to receive assistance awards. DOJ grant funds, however, may not be used to fund any inherently religious activity, such as prayer or worship. Inherently religious activity is permissible, although it cannot occur during an activity funded with DOJ grant funds; rather, such religious activity must be separate in time or place from the DOJ-funded program. Further, participation in such activity by individuals receiving services must be voluntary. Programs funded by DOJ are not permitted to discriminate in the provision of services on the basis of a beneficiary's religion.

Applicants are encouraged to review the Civil Rights Compliance section under "Additional Requirements" in this announcement.

## **Specific Information —Social Science Research on the Role and Impact of Forensic Evidence on the Criminal Justice Process**

With advances in technology, forensic evidence has become an increasingly powerful tool in criminal investigations. The advent of DNA technology has revolutionized forensic science, and DNA's ability to identify criminal offenders and exonerate the innocent has helped solve crimes that would not have been solvable 20 years ago. Similarly, advances in other forensic disciplines, such as impression evidence (e.g., shoeprints and firearms/tool marks) and trace evidence (e.g., fibers, paint, glass), have provided increasingly valuable information about the source of the physical evidence or the circumstances surrounding a criminal act.

Forensic evidence is an integral part of many criminal investigations, however, there has been limited research on the impact of forensic evidence on the criminal justice system.<sup>1</sup> NIJ is seeking proposals for social science research that evaluates the use of forensic evidence in the criminal justice system through the collection, analysis, and subsequent investigative and adjudicative processes. For example, in some criminal offenses, one or two types of forensic evidence may contribute disproportionately to successful case outcomes, or successful outcomes may be a function of the totality of forensic evidence, or perhaps the combination of forensic and non-forensic evidence plays the primary role.

Findings from this research could influence policies on such issues as the allocation of resources and the training of laboratory and crime scene personnel.

Proposals should describe how the research would accomplish four primary objectives: (1) estimate the percentage of crime scenes from which one or more types of forensic

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<sup>1</sup> Peterson, J.L., Ryan, J.P., Houlden, P.J., and Mihajlovic, S., "The Uses and Effects of Forensic Science in the Adjudication of Felony Cases," *Journal of Forensic Sciences, JFSCA*, Vol. 32, No. 6 (November 1987): 1730-1753.

evidence is collected; (2) describe and catalog the kinds of forensic evidence collected at crime scenes; (3) track the use and attrition of forensic evidence in the criminal justice system from crime scenes through laboratory analysis, and then through subsequent criminal justice processes; and (4) identify which forms of forensic evidence contribute most frequently (relative to their availability at a crime scene) to successful case outcomes. Applicants should consider and discuss definitions of “successful case outcome” beyond identifying a suspect or successfully prosecuting (i.e., guilty verdict or plea agreement) a case. Successful case outcomes may include arrests made, suspects eliminated, and forensic evidence introduced in court proceedings.

A number of variables must be accounted for to determine how forensic evidence contributes to case outcomes. The probative value of certain types of forensic evidence will vary by the type of crime scene. For example, forensic evidence may be more probative in violent offenses involving strangers or property crimes than in violent offenses perpetrated by acquaintances. The quality of forensic evidence will vary from scene to scene (e.g., partial fingerprint vs. full fingerprint). Thus, rather than simply measuring the quantity and identifying the types of evidence at crime scenes, proposed research should include some measure of the quality of the evidence obtained. Additionally, the proposed research should describe the full range of forensic evidence that can be found at crime scenes (biological, trace, impression, controlled substances, etc.). Definitions for traditional functional areas can be found in the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board Manual Glossary, available at <http://www.ascl-dlab.org/legacy/aslablegacyglossary.html>. Definitions for forensic science functional areas outside the traditional forensic science crime laboratory can be found in the NIJ publication *Education and Training in Forensic Science: A Guide for Forensic Science Laboratories, Educational Institutions, and Students*, available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/203099.htm>.

It is anticipated that a multisite approach will be required. Data could be gathered in a sample of jurisdictions varying by size, location, population demographics, etc., in two principal ways: (1) indepth, cross-sectional data surveys describing forensic evidence found at the crime scene, applied to police investigations, analyzed by the crime laboratory, and used in the adjudicative process; and, (2) longitudinal data surveys in which criminal offenses are tracked from beginning to end so as to trace the flow and filtering of evidence as the case proceeds through the criminal justice system. It is assumed that jurisdictions will vary in quantity of forensic evidence collected and/or subsequently analyzed. In determining the number of sites on which to focus, applicants should consider the trade-off between the depth of analysis and the number of sites examined. The bulk of the analyses will probably be conducted using extant data but applicants will need to supplement this with surveys or other forms of qualitative data.

**What will *not* be funded:**

1. Provision of training or direct service.
2. Proposals primarily to purchase equipment, materials, or supplies. (Your budget may include these items if they are necessary to conduct applied research, development, demonstration, evaluation, or analysis, but NIJ does not fund proposals that are primarily to purchase equipment.)
3. Work that will be funded under another specific solicitation.

**Cost of proposed work:** NIJ anticipates that up to \$600,000 may become available for an award made through this solicitation. All NIJ awards are subject to the availability of appropriated funds. NIJ expects to make one award depending on funds available and number of high-quality applications. If you propose a project that exceeds the amount of money that may be available for this solicitation, we recommend that you divide the project into phases, stages, or tasks so that NIJ can consider making an award for a specific portion of the work. NIJ cannot guarantee that subsequent phases, stages, or tasks will be funded. Such additional funding depends on NIJ’s resources and your satisfactory completion of each phase, stage, or task. Note: Deliverables (e.g., a final report) will be required at the end of each phase, stage, or task.

A grant made by NIJ under this solicitation may account for up to 100 percent of the total cost of the project. See "Cofunding," under "What an Application Must Include."

## Performance Measures

To assist in fulfilling the Department’s responsibilities under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), P.L. 103-62, applicants who receive funding under this solicitation must provide data that measures the results of their work. Performance measures for this solicitation are as follows:

Objective	Performance Measures	Data Grantee Provides
<p>Develop and analyze information and data having clear implications for criminal justice policy and practice.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Relevance to the needs of the field as measured by whether the grantee’s substantive scope did not deviate from the funded proposal or any subsequent agency modifications to the scope.</li> <li>2. Quality of the research as assessed by peer reviewers.</li> <li>3. Quality of management as measured by whether significant interim project milestones were achieved, final deadlines were met, and costs remained within approved limits.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A final report providing a comprehensive overview of the project and a detailed description of the project design, data, and methods; a full presentation of scientific findings; and a thorough discussion of the implications of the project findings for criminal justice practice and policy.</li> <li>2. Quarterly financial reports, semi-annual progress reports, and a final progress report.</li> </ol>

## How to Apply

DOJ is participating in the e-Government initiative, one of 25 initiatives included in the President’s Management Agenda. Part of this initiative—Grants.gov—is a “one-stop

storefront” that provides a unified process for all customers of federal grants to find funding opportunities and apply for funding.

**Grants.Gov Instructions:** Complete instructions can be found at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding/howto.htm>. If you experience difficulties at any point during this process, please call the Grants.gov Customer Support Hotline at **1-800-518-4726**.

**CFDA Number:** The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number for this solicitation is 16.560, titled “National Institute of Justice Research, Evaluation, and Development Project Grants,” and the Grants.gov funding opportunity number is 2006-NIJ-1384.

**A DUNS number is required:** The Office of Management and Budget requires that all businesses and nonprofit applicants for Federal funds include a DUNS (Data Universal Numeric System) number in their application for a new award or renewal of an award. Applications without a DUNS number are incomplete. A DUNS number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of entities receiving Federal funds. The identifier is used for tracking purposes and to validate address and point of contact information. The DUNS number will be used throughout the grant life cycle. Obtaining a DUNS number is a free, simple, one-time activity. Obtain one by calling 1-866-705-5711 or by applying online at <http://www.dunandbradstreet.com>. Individuals are exempt from this requirement.

## What an Application Must Include

### Standard Form 424

#### Program Narrative

The Program Narrative includes:

- a. Abstract (not to exceed 400 words).
- b. Table of contents.
- c. Main body, which includes:
  - Purpose, goals, and objectives.
  - Review of relevant literature.
  - Research design and methods.
  - Implications for policy and practice.
  - Management plan and organization.
  - Dissemination strategy.
- d. Appendixes (not counted against solicitation page limit) include:
  - Bibliography/References (if applicable).
  - List of key personnel (required).
  - Résumés of key personnel (required).
  - List of previous and current NIJ awards (required).
  - Letters of cooperation/support or administrative agreements from organizations collaborating in the project (if applicable).
  - Chart for timeline, research calendar, or milestones (required).
  - Other materials required by the solicitation.

## **Budget Detail Worksheet**

Templates for filling out the Budget Detail Worksheet may be found through the Internet at [http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/Forms/budget\\_fillable.pdf](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/Forms/budget_fillable.pdf), OJP Standard Forms & Instructions. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of the Comptroller's Customer Service Center at 1-800-458-0786.

## **Budget Narrative**

**Negotiated Indirect Rate Agreement** (if applicable)

## **Other Program Attachments**

These include several forms, available on OJP's funding page at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/forms.htm>.

**Page limit:** The program narrative section of your proposal must not exceed 30 double-spaced pages in 12-point font with 1-inch margins. Abstract, table of contents, charts, figures, appendixes, and government forms do not count toward the 30-page limit for the narrative section.

**Cofunding:** A grant made by NIJ under this solicitation may account for up to 100 percent of the total cost of the project. You must indicate whether you believe it is feasible for you to contribute cash, facilities, or services as non-Federal support for the project. Your proposal should identify generally any such contributions that you expect to make and your proposed budget should indicate in detail which items, if any, will be supported with non-Federal contributions.

## **Selection Criteria**

Successful applicants must demonstrate the following:

**Understanding of the problem and its importance.**

**Quality and technical merit.**

1. Awareness of the state of current research or technology.
2. Soundness of methodology and analytic and technical approach.
3. Feasibility of proposed project and awareness of pitfalls.
4. Innovation and creativity (when appropriate).

**Impact of the proposed project.**

1. Potential for significant advances in scientific or technical understanding of the problem.
2. Potential for significant advances in the field.
3. Relevance for improving the policy and practice of criminal justice and related agencies and improving public safety, security, and quality of life.
4. Affordability and cost-effectiveness of proposed end products, when applicable (e.g., purchase price and maintenance costs for a new technology or cost of training to use the technology).
5. Perceived potential for commercialization and/or implementation of a new technology (when applicable).

**Capabilities, demonstrated productivity, and experience of applicants.**

1. Qualifications and experience of proposed staff.
2. Demonstrated ability of proposed staff and organization to manage the effort.
3. Adequacy of the plan to manage the project, including how various tasks are subdivided and resources are used.
4. Successful past performance on NIJ grants and contracts (when applicable).

**Budget.**

1. Total cost of the project relative to the perceived benefit.
2. Appropriateness of the budget relative to the level of effort.
3. Use of existing resources to conserve costs.

**Dissemination strategy.**

1. Well-defined plan for the grant recipient to disseminate results to appropriate audiences, including researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.
2. Suggestions for print and electronic products NIJ might develop for practitioners and policymakers.

**Relevance of the project for policy and practice:** Higher quality proposals clearly explain the practical implications of the project. They connect technical expertise with policy and practice. To ensure that the project has strong relevance for policy and practice, some researchers and technologists collaborate with practitioners and policymakers. You may include letters showing support from practitioners, but they carry less weight than clear evidence that you understand why policymakers and practitioners would benefit from your work and how they would use it. While a partnership may affect State or local activities, it should also have broader implications for others across the country.

## Review Process

NIJ is firmly committed to the competitive process in awarding grants. All proposals are subjected to independent peer-review panel evaluations. External peer-review panelists consider both technical and programmatic merits. Panelists are selected based on their expertise in subject areas pertinent to the proposals.

Peer-review panelists will evaluate proposals using the criteria listed above. NIJ staff then make recommendations to the NIJ Director. The Director makes award decisions.

**Reasons for rejection:** NIJ may reject applications that are incomplete, do not respond to the scope of the solicitation, do not comply with format requirements, or are submitted after the deadline. No additions to the original submission are allowed.

**When awards will be made:** All applicants, whether they are accepted or rejected, will be notified. The review and approval process takes about 6 months. You should not propose to begin work until at least 6 months after the proposal deadline on the cover of this solicitation. Also, you should not expect to receive notification of a decision for at least 6 months after that date. Lists of awards are updated regularly on NIJ's Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm>.

## Additional Requirements

- Civil Rights Compliance
- Confidentiality and Human Subjects Protections regulations
- Anti-Lobbying Act
- Financial and Government Audit Requirements
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance
- DOJ Information Technology Standards
- Single Point of Contact Review
- Non-supplanting of State or Local Funds
- Criminal Penalty for False Statements
- Compliance with Office of the Comptroller Financial Guide
- Suspension or Termination of Funding
- Non-profit Organizations
- Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA)
- Rights in Intellectual Property

We strongly encourage you to review the information pertaining to these additional requirements prior to submitting your application. Additional information for each can be found at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/otherrequirements.htm>.

If your proposal is funded, you will be required to submit several reports and other materials as follows:

**Final substantive report:** The final report should be a comprehensive overview of the project and should include a detailed description of the project design, data, and methods; a full presentation of scientific findings; and a thorough discussion of the implications of the project findings for criminal justice practice and policy. It must contain an abstract of no more than 400 words and an executive summary of no more than 2,500 words.

A draft of the final report, abstract, and executive summary must be submitted 90 days before the end date of the grant. The draft final report will be peer reviewed upon submission. The reviews will be forwarded to the principal investigator with suggestions for revisions. The author must then submit the revised final report, abstract, and

executive summary by the end date of the grant. The abstract, executive summary, and final report must be submitted in both paper and electronic formats.

For evaluation studies, the final report should 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.)

**Interim reports:** Grantees must submit quarterly financial reports, semi-annual progress reports, a final progress report, and, if applicable, an annual audit report in accordance with Office of Management and Budget Circular A-133. Future awards and fund drawdowns may be withheld if reports are delinquent.