Office of the Governor
Criminal Justice Division

Funding Announcement:
Coverdell Forensic Sciences Improvement Program

March 15, 2017

Opportunity Snapshot

Below is a high-level overview of many of the elements of this opportunity. Full information is provided in the funding announcement that follows.

Purpose

The purpose of this announcement is to solicit grant applications for the Coverdell Forensic Sciences Improvement Program for projects that improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science and medical examiner services.

Organizational Eligibility

Applications may be submitted by state agencies and units of local government, including counties, municipalities, and eligible special districts.

Eligible Funding Areas

Eligible projects must: improve the quality and timeliness of forensic services; or reduce the backlog in the analysis of forensic science evidence including firearms examinations, latent prints, toxicology, controlled substances, forensic pathology, questionable documents, and trace evidence.

Project Periods

Projects may not exceed a 9-month period.

Budget

The minimum allowed for an application under this program is $10,000.

Match

There is no required match under this program.

Funds Available

It is anticipated that up to $600k may be funded under this announcement.

Process

Applicants will respond to this funding announcement by completing an application in eGrants (https://eGrants.gov.texas.gov).

Contact Information

If additional information is needed, contact the eGrants help desk at eGrants@gov.texas.gov or (512) 463-1919.

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Coverdell Forensic Sciences Program

Purpose

The goal of the Criminal Justice Division (CJD) is to provide needed funding to improve public safety and support victims of crime by filling system gaps and promoting innovative solutions to common problems. CJD is accepting applications for projects that will make improvements to the quality and timely processing of forensic evidence resulting in an overall reduction in the backlog of non-DNA evidence during the upcoming year.

How to Apply

If you are interested in applying for a grant under this program, follow the four-step process outlined below.

- Step One - Review the Process: Get familiar with the funding announcement and the process used for this particular program.

- Step Two - Consider the Requirements: Consider the eligibility requirements as well as what will be required of successful applicants.

- Step Three - Apply in eGrants. Compile and submit your grant application. To understand how to apply online or to register for the system go to https://eGrants.gov.texas.gov.

- Step Four – Funding Decisions and Grant Acceptance. Await the funding decision, which is provided through a grant award or other notice from CJD. If you receive an award, complete the acceptance process to access funds.

Step 1: Review the Process

Timeline

Action	Date
Funding Announcement Release	March 15, 2017
Online System Opening Date	April 3, 2017
Final Date to Submit an Application	June 5, 2017 at 5PM CST
Start Date	January 1, 2018
Latest End Date	September 30, 2018

Submission Method

Applicants must submit applications through via eGrants (https://eGrants.gov.texas.gov) by the deadline listed above.

Step 2: Consider the Requirements

Organizational Eligibility

Applications may be submitted by state agencies and units of local government, including counties, municipalities, and eligible special districts). Further, applicants must be accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting body.

Eligible Funding Areas

Projects must have one or more of the following purposes:

1. To improve the quality and timeliness of forensic services; or

2. To reduce the backlog in the analysis of forensic science evidence including firearms examinations, latent prints, toxicology, controlled substances, forensic pathology, questionable documents, and trace evidence. A backlog exists if forensic evidence has been stored in a laboratory, medical examiner's office, coroner's office, law enforcement storage facility, or medical facility and has not been subjected to all appropriate forensic testing because of a lack of resources or personnel.

Funding and Project Period Limits

Funding Limits. The minimum allowed for an application under this program is $10,000.

Project Period. Grant-funded projects will begin on or after January 1, 2018, and will expire on or before September 30, 2018.

Available Funding. It is anticipated that up to $600k may be funded under this announcement. .

Source of Funding. Federal funding for these projects is authorized under Title I of the Omnibus Safe Streets and Crime Control Act of 1968, Part BB, codified at 42 U.S.C. §3797j-3797o. Funds will be managed in accordance with federal guidelines for the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program, CFDA Number 16.742. All awards are subject to the availability of appropriated federal funds and any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law.

Match Requirement

There is no required match under this program.

Eligible Expenses

Allowable uses of funds are limited to the following:

1. Overtime for forensic personnel;

2. Contracted forensic analysis to reduce the backlog in non-DNA evidence;

3. Computerization including funds to upgrade, replace, lease or purchase computer hardware and software for forensic analyses and data management;

4. Laboratory equipment including the upgrade, replacement, lease or purchase of laboratory or medical examiner equipment and instrumentation; and

5. Laboratory supplies.

Ineligible Costs and Activities

Grant funds may not be used to support the unallowable services, activities, and costs listed in the Guide to Grants (available at https://egrants.gov.texas.gov/FileDirectory/Guide_to_Grants_v8.pdf) and:

1. Construction, renovation, or remodeling;

2. Medical services;

3. Non-law enforcement vehicles or equipment for government agencies that are for general agency use;

4. Law enforcement equipment that is standard department issue;

5. Transportation, lodging, per diem or any related costs for participants, when grant funds are used to develop and conduct training;

6. Expenses for non-forensic investigatory functions;

7. Processing DNA evidence;

8. Research or statistical projects or activities; and

9. Any other prohibition imposed by federal, state or local law or regulation.

Reporting Requirements

Financial and Progress Reports. At the end of each quarter of state fiscal year during the one-year grant period, grantees will be required to submit a financial status report via eGrants and a progress report via https://cjd.tamu.edu/ in the format required by CJD.

Program-Specific Requirements

Accreditation. Grantees must comply with state regulations and rules for accreditation promulgated by the Texas Department of Public Safety in the Texas Administrative Code, Title 37, Part 1, Chapter 28, Subchapter I. Additionally, the applicant must operate a laboratory or medical examiner office that is accredited through the Laboratory Accreditation Board of the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors, the National Association of Medical Examiners, or other recognized accrediting body.

Misconduct. Applicants should comply with state regulations for reporting misconduct or professional negligence to the Texas Forensic Science Commission, Code of Criminal Procedure, Article 38.01; or to the Texas Medical Board, Occupations Code, Chapter 164.

Laboratory Practices. Applicants should use generally accepted laboratory practices and procedures established by accrediting organizations or appropriate certifying bodies.

Contract Management. Grantees must be able to ensure that contractors comply with all applicable rules and regulations.

Standard CJD Requirements

Grantee Conditions and Responsibilities. Grantees must comply with all applicable conditions and responsibilities in the *Grantee Conditions and Responsibilities* document, available at: https://egrants.gov.texas.gov/FileDirectory/SOGA_ResponsibilitiesMemo_2016-08-25.pdf.

CJD Regulations: Grantees must comply with the standards applicable to this funding source cited in the Texas Administrative Code (1 TAC Chapter 3), and all statutes, requirements, and guidelines applicable to this funding. For more information on these statutes, requirements, and guidelines, consult the *Guide to Grants* and the *Grantee Conditions and Responsibilities*.

Uniform Crime Reports. Eligible applicants operating a law enforcement agency must be current on reporting Part I violent crime data to the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) for inclusion in the annual Uniform Crime Report (UCR). To be considered eligible for funding, applicants must have submitted a full twelve months of accurate data to DPS for the most recent calendar year.

Criminal History Reporting. The county (or counties) in which the applicant is located must have a 90% average on both adult and juvenile criminal history dispositions reported to the Texas Department of Public Safety for calendar years 2011 through 2015.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement Requests: An application requirement pertaining to full compliance with Department of Homeland Security detainer requests applies to all municipal or county governments that operates a subdivision or department that detains individuals after arrest for a criminal violation. Full text of this certification can be found on the Narrative tab of each application or at http://gov.texas.gov/cjd/dhs_detainerrequest. All applicants must select one of four options in their eGrants application to be considered for funding under this announcement.

Step 3: Apply via eGrants

Basics

To apply to CJD for these grants, you must complete or make sure you have already completed some standard requirements. All of the following are needed to apply within eGrants:

- Applicants must have a DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) number assigned to its agency (to request a DUNS number, go to http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/displayHomePage.do).

- Applicants must be registered in the federal System for Award Management (SAM) database located at https://www.sam.gov/ and maintain an active registration throughout the grant period.

- Applicants must have or register for an account in eGrants eGrants@gov.texas.gov.

Program-Specific Questions

The eGrants system will provide additional information about the requirements of applying and contents of the application. Answer these questions in Section 1, Project-Specific Questions under the narrative tab. Following are some key aspects:

Laboratory Accreditation. Provide a list of accreditations held by your laboratory or medical examiner.

Accreditation Disciplines. Provide a list of the disciplines by which your laboratory or medical examiner's office is accredited.

National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUS). Applicants must certify to the NAMUS requirements.

Sustainment. Applicants must be able to provide the number of years that are planned to request for continuation funding, a longer term sustainment plan or why a plan is not possible.

Project Narrative

Within eGrants, applicants will complete several narrative fields. <u>Each funding announcement has different instructions for the nine Project Narrative boxes.</u> These instructions are not contained on eGrants, so applicants must review the instructions below. <u>Failure to provide the information requested may result in an application being deemed ineligible for funding.</u>

Project Abstract. Provide a brief summary of the proposed project. Do not share new information here that you do not include in the questions below. This abstract is a description of your project and intended for the public and policy makers. Be sure that the summary is easy to understand by a person not familiar with your project. (Limit to 1500 characters.)

Problem Statement: Provide a <u>description</u> of the nature and scope of the <u>problem</u> in your service area that this proposed project will address. This must be a statement of the core, underlying problem. A lack of resources is not, in and of itself, a problem. Applicant should use the "Performance Management" section below to demonstrate how the Project Approach & Activities will address this problem. Applicants should use the "Supporting Data" to provide the <u>numbers</u> that back up the <u>description</u> of the problem in this section.

Supporting Data: Provide supporting data, including baseline statistics and the sources of your data, to provide evidence that the problem exists, its size and scope, and its effects on the target population. Do not use statewide data for a local problem or national data for a statewide problem. Data on particular characteristics of the target population should be entered below under "Target Group."

Project Approach & Activities: Provide the core information needed to understand the methodologies, approaches, and activities to be employed by the project. Provide a rationale for choosing this particular model. Any therapy or licensed counseling provided should include a description of the modality/framework used. A reader should also be able to understand how the approach and activities tie to solving the stated problem. Applicants should use the "Evidence-Based Practices" section below to cite the specific research, evidence, or established best/promising practices that provide the basis for the approach and activities described in this section.

Capacity & Capabilities: Describe the applicant organization's background as well as organizational and staff capabilities and qualifications to carry out this specific project using the approaches and activities provided above. Provide a brief summary of any collaborative partnerships created for the purpose of the proposed project. If the applicant indicates on the Activities tab that licensed or certified personnel will perform work, list each license or certification and upload a list of each person and their relevant corresponding license or certification. Empty positions requiring a license or certification should be noted.

Performance Management: Provide an understanding of how the applicant organization will measure success for this project. What are the project's goals and objectives and what are the project's performance measures, both output and outcome? How do these goals, objectives, and measures tie to the problem that the project seeks to solve? What is the current baseline information for these measures as well as the goals for the project period?

> Goals are broad statements that indicate the general intentions of the project to achieve some outcome. They do need to be measurable in and of themselves and may be abstract in nature.

> Objectives are clear, tangible, and specific statements of what the project is trying to achieve. Objectives should be expressed in the following form: To [reduce/increase/enhance/etc.] [something], by [x amount], by [dd/mm/yy date]. A project can have multiple objectives.

> Measures use data to provide verifiable, numeric information that tie to one or more objectives and indicate progress toward its achievement. Measures might include volume, time savings, cost savings, resource savings, success rates, conformance rates, timeliness, perception shifts, or other factors. (The most relevant and impactful project-specific measures must be included under the Measures tab in eGrants.)

Data Management: Provide an understanding of how the applicant organization plans to collect, track and maintain the data needed to determine whether the project is meeting the goals, objectives, and measures stated above. Describe any methods, mechanisms, or tools used to generate measures. Applicants should give confidence that the data they collect will be accurate, maintained, and analyzed in a manner that enables them to adapt to changing assessments of the problem or project performance, and to evaluate and document the effectiveness of the project.

Target Group: Describe the population that this project plans to provide or support direct services to. Include the size and basic demographics for the people served, as well as the challenges they face, and any other information relevant to the project. Be specific and use supporting data. Applicants should demonstrate there that they understand their target group well enough to effectively carry out the project.

Evidence-Based Practices: Justify the selection of the methods, approach, and activities described above. Applicants should preferably be able to cite the research, evidence, or published best/promising-practices model used as the basis for the project's design. In case of an equipment or technology grant, what evidence or best/promising-practices model is there to support the purchase? Wherever possible, provide at least one citation or link. If the project approach and activities described above are not based on existing evidence, the applicant must describe why they believe the method to be promising. Failure to adequately provide justification for the project design may result in the project not being funded in favor of other projects based on evidence, established best/promising practices, or adequately explained.

CJD Purpose Area

In this <u>new section</u> of the Activities tab, applicants must assign percentages (adding up to 100%) of their project's purpose areas to the available categories. Purpose areas should be considered in terms of the ultimate goal of the project, rather than how the project will accomplish its goals.

Allowable Purpose Areas: The purpose areas displayed on the Activities tab in eGrants are for <u>all</u> CJD grant programs, <u>but only the "Prosecution and Investigation" purpose area is eligible</u> under this funding announcement.

National Environmental Policy Act Checklist

The federal government requires all grantees under this funding announcement to submit a *National Institute of Justice Grants Program Checklist* regarding potential project impacts subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Applicants must complete and upload the checklist to the *Upload.Files* tab of eGrants for their application to be considered complete. The checklist is available at: https://www.nij.gov/funding/Documents/nij-grant-program-checklist-nepa.pdf.

Step 4: Funding Decisions and Grant Acceptance

Selection Criteria

Application Screening: CJD will screen all applications to ensure that they meet the requirements included in the funding announcement. Applications that meet those requirements will move forward to the merit review phase.

Merit Review: Applications will be reviewed by a panel appointed by the CJD executive director in an effort to prioritize funding. The merit review panel will assess and score each application on a 100-point scale, and then report its findings to the executive director. Scores will be based on the following criteria:

- **Problem (20 points):** The extent to which the applicant demonstrates: (1) that the problem stated warrants action; (2) that the applicant has a thorough understanding of it; and (3) how it relates to CJD's program priorities as stated in this funding announcement. For this category, merit reviewers will consider the Project Narrative's Problem Statement, Target Group, and Supporting Data sections, as well as information from the Activities and Measures tabs and the program-specific question on the Narrative tab. CJD may also make external data available to the panel to inform their assessment, where relevant.

- **Project Strategy (35 points):** The extent to which the applicant demonstrates: (1) that the project approach clearly addresses the problem stated; (2) that the strategy will be effective at delivering the proposed outcomes; and (3) that the proposed approach is based on logical practices, as well as on established evidence, research, science, or best or promising practices. For this category, the merit reviewers will consider the Project Narrative's Project Approach and Activities, Evidence-Based Practices, and Supporting Data sections, as well as information from the Activities and Measures tabs and the program-specific questions on the Narrative tab.

- **Performance Management (15 points):** The extent to which the applicant demonstrates: (1) that the organization is capable of accurately assessing needs; (2) is able to manage and execute strategies and plans; (3) has the skills and capacity to measure, analyze, and respond to performance data; and (4) has a plan or method to monitor results and performance and use this information to inform changes to the project approach. For this category, the merit reviewers will consider the Project Narrative's Performance Management and Data Management sections.

- **Capacity and Capabilities (30 points):** The extent to which the applicant demonstrates: (1) that the organization has a track record of success; (2) that it has the staff capabilities and capacity needed to deliver strong results; and (3) that it has the administrative and financial capability to manage the grant and the project well. For this category, the merit reviewers will consider the Project Narrative's Capacity and Capabilities section.

- **Cost Effectiveness (additional criteria using a 1-5 scale):** While not part of the 100-point merit review scale, the merit reviewers will provide a separate score for cost effectiveness. This score is based on the extent to which the budget seems reasonable to carry out the project as proposed, including the established measures and goals (as outlined in the Performance Management section of the Project Narrative). For this category, the merit review panel will consider the project budget, the full project narrative, and information from the Activities and Measures tabs.

Final Decisions – All Projects: The executive director will consider merit review rankings along with other factors and make all final funding decisions. Other factors may include cost effectiveness, overall funds availability, CJD or state government priorities and strategies, legislative directives, need, geographic distribution, balance of focuses and approaches, or other relevant factors.

CJD may not fund all applications or may only award part of the amount requested. Per Rule 3.9 of the Texas Administrative Code, all funding decisions made by the executive director are final and are not subject to appeal. The receipt of an application by CJD does not obligate CJD to fund the grant or to fund it at the amount requested.

Announcements

After CJD makes final funding decisions, each applicant will receive either an unfunded notice or a preliminary decision notification or final grant award. The award will provide all of the conditions and requirements of the grant. Release of final grant awards are always contingent on CJD's receipt of the federal grant award under which the program is funded and CJD cannot release or guarantee funding to any applicant until that award is received and acceptance is processed and a determination is made that adequate funding is available. All grantees receiving federal and state funds must comply with the applicable statutes, rules, regulations, and guidelines related to the funding source under which the grant is funded. In instances where both federal and state requirements apply to a grantee, the more restrictive requirements apply.

About CJD

Our mission at the Criminal Justice Division is to direct much needed resources to those who are committed to making Texas a safer place and those who help victims of crime to recover and feel safe again. In carrying out this mission, we are committed to helping our grantees by actively finding ways for them to accomplish their goals and by making sure that we always have our eye to identifying the approaches that work best. We envision positive and beneficial working relationships with our grantees where we provide as much assistance as is needed and where are always ready with answers, not burdensome restrictions or requirements.

CJD makes over $250 million in funding available to hundreds of organizations during state fiscal year 2017 for juvenile justice, delinquency prevention, victims services, law enforcement, prosecution, courts, specialty courts, prevention of child sex trafficking, and other types of projects to benefit Texans.

Version 4: January 30, 2017