



Office of the Governor, Public Safety Office
Criminal Justice Division
Funding Announcement: ***Paul Coverdell
Forensic Sciences Improvement Grant
Program, FY2021***

Purpose

The purpose of this announcement is to solicit applications for projects that improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science or medical examiners services. Specific funding has been reserved for projects that support responses to the opioid epidemic.

Available Funding

Federal Funds are authorized under 34 U.S.C. 10561 Paul Coverdell Forensic Sciences Improvement Grants. Coverdell funds are made available through a Congressional appropriation to the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice (NIJ). All awards are subject to the availability of appropriated federal funds and any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law.

Eligible Organizations

Applications may be submitted by state agencies and units of local government that operate an accredited crime laboratory or medical examiner/coroner's office in Texas. A unit of local government is defined as a non-statewide governmental body with the authority to establish a budget and impose taxes.

All applications submitted by accredited crime laboratories must be submitted by a unit of government affiliated with the laboratory, including an authorizing resolution from that unit of government. For example, a city crime laboratory must apply under their municipal government, and community supervision and corrections departments, district attorneys, and judicial districts must apply through their affiliated county government (or one of the counties, in the case of agencies that serve more than one county).

Application Process

Applicants must access the PSO's eGrants grant management website at <https://eGrants.gov.texas.gov> to register and apply for funding. For more instructions and information, see *Developing a Good Project Narrative Guide*, available [here](#).

Key Dates

Action	Date
Funding Announcement Release	04/03/2020
Online System Opening Date	04/03/2020
Final Date to Submit and Certify an Application	07/06/2020 at 5:00pm CST
Earliest Project Start Date	01/01/2021

Project Period

Projects must begin on or after 01/01/2021 and expire on or before 09/30/2021.

Funding Levels

The total amount of grant funds available is anticipated to be \$1.6M, with 56% of the available amount being allocated towards opioid-related projects.

Minimum: \$10,000

Maximum: None

Match Requirement: None

Standards

Grantees must comply with standards applicable to this fund source cited in the State Uniform Grant Management Standards ([UGMS](#)), [Federal Uniform Grant Guidance](#), and all statutes, requirements, and guidelines applicable to this funding.

Eligible Activities and Costs

Funds may only be used to carry out the following activities:

1. All or a substantial part of a program intended to improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science or medical examiner/coroner's office services in the state, including those services provided by laboratories operated by the state and those operated by units of local government;
2. Eliminate a backlog in the analysis of forensic science evidence, including, among other things, a backlog with respect to firearms examination, latent prints, impression evidence, toxicology, digital evidence, fire evidence, controlled substances, forensic pathology, questioned documents, and trace evidence;
3. Train, assist, and employ forensic laboratory personnel and medicolegal death investigators, as needed to eliminate such a backlog;
4. Address emerging forensic science issues (such as statistics, contextual bias, and uncertainty of measurement) and emerging forensic science technology (such as high throughput automation, statistical software, and new types of instrumentation);
5. Educate and train forensic pathologists; or

6. Fund medicolegal death investigation systems to facilitate accreditation of medical examiner and coroner offices and certification of medicolegal death investigators.

Program-Specific Requirements

The eGrants system will provide additional information about the requirements of applying and contents of the application. The following are some key aspects:

Accreditation. Grantees must comply with state regulations and rules for accreditation, including forensic analyst licensing for mandatory disciplines, promulgated by the Texas Forensic Science Commission in the Texas Administrative Code, Title 37, Part 15, Chapter 651. 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 must use generally accepted laboratory practices and procedures established by accrediting organizations or appropriate certifying bodies.

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

Budget Description. Projects must thoroughly and clearly define if the budget line items are opioid-related [OPIOID] or non-opioid [NON-OPIOID] related costs. See below for example:

Grantee-Defined Line Item
[OPIOID] Gas-Chromatograph Mass Spectrometer System (GC-MS)
[NON-OPIOID] Firearms and Toolmarks Comparison Microscope System

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://nij.gov/funding/Documents/nij-grant-program-checklist-nepa.pdf>.

Eligibility Requirements

1. Entities receiving funds from CJD must be located in a county that has an average of 90% or above on both adult and juvenile dispositions entered into the computerized criminal history database maintained by the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) as directed in the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, Chapter 60. The disposition completeness percentage is defined as the percentage of arrest charges a county reports to DPS for which a disposition has been subsequently reported and entered into the computerized criminal history system.

Beginning January 1, 2020, counties applying for grant awards from the Office of the Governor must commit that the county will report at least 90 percent of convictions within seven business days to the Criminal Justice Information System at the Department of Public Safety. By January 1, 2021, such reporting must take place within five business days.

2. 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.
3. The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) has established a goal set by the Texas Legislature for all local law enforcement agencies to implement and report crime statistics data by using the requirements of the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) no later than September 1, 2019. Additionally, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) will collect required crime statistics solely through the NIBRS starting January 1, 2021. Due to these upcoming state and federal deadlines, grantees are advised that eligibility for future grant funding may be tied to compliance with NIBRS. Financial grant assistance for transitioning to NIBRS may be available for your jurisdiction from the Criminal Justice Division (CJD).
4. Local units of government, including cities, counties and other general purpose political subdivisions, as appropriate, and institutions of higher education that operate a law enforcement agency, must comply with all aspects of the programs and procedures utilized by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) to: (1) notify DHS of all information requested by DHS related to illegal aliens in Agency’s custody; and (2) detain such illegal aliens in accordance with requests by DHS. Additionally, counties and municipalities may NOT have in effect, purport to have in effect, or make themselves subject to or bound by, any law, rule, policy, or practice (written or unwritten) that would: (1) require or authorize the public disclosure of federal law enforcement information in order to conceal, harbor, or shield from detection fugitives from justice or aliens illegally in the United States; or (2) impede federal officers from exercising authority under 8 U.S.C. § 1226(a), § 1226(c), § 1231(a), § 1357(a), § 1366(1), or § 1366(3). Lastly, eligible applicants must comply with all provisions, policies, and penalties found in Chapter 752, Subchapter C of the Texas Government Code.

Each local unit of government, and institution of higher education that operates a law enforcement agency, must download, complete and then upload into eGrants the [CEO/Law Enforcement Certifications and Assurances Form](#) certifying compliance with federal and state immigration enforcement requirements. This Form is required for each application submitted to OOG and is active until August 31, 2021 or the end of the grant period, whichever is later.

5. Eligible applicants must have a DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) number assigned to its agency (to request a DUNS number, go to <https://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>).

6. Eligible applicants must be registered in the federal System for Award Management (SAM) database located at <https://sam.gov/>.

Failure to comply with program eligibility requirements may cause funds to be withheld and/or suspension or termination of grant funds.

Prohibitions

Grant funds may not be used to support the unallowable costs listed in the [Guide to Grants](#) or any of the following unallowable costs:

1. Construction, renovation, or remodeling;
2. Medical services;
3. Law enforcement equipment that is standard department issue;
4. Transportation, lodging, per diem or any related costs for participants, when grant funds are used to develop and conduct training;
5. Processing DNA evidence from sexual assault evidence kits;
6. Research or statistical projects or activities, however, applicants may address emerging forensic science issues and technology through implementation of new technologies and processes into public laboratories;
7. Purchase and/or lease of vehicles, such as crime scene vans
8. Expenses other than those listed above (including expenses for general law enforcement functions or non-forensic investigatory functions); and
9. Any other prohibition imposed by federal, state or local law or regulation.

Selection Process

Application Screening: The Office of the Governor will screen all applications to ensure that they meet the requirements included in the funding announcement.

Peer/Merit Review: The Office of the Governor will review applications to understand the overall demand for the program and for significant variations in costs per item. After this review, the Office of the Governor will determine if all eligible applications can be funded based on funds available, if there are cost-effectiveness benefits to normalizing or setting limits on the range of costs, and if other fair-share cuts may allow for broader distribution and a higher number of projects while still remaining effective.

Final Decisions: The Office of the Governor will consider rankings along with other factors and make all final funding decisions. Other factors may include cost effectiveness, overall funds availability, or state government priorities and strategies, legislative directives, need, geographic distribution, balance of focuses and approaches, or other relevant factors.

The Office of the Governor may not fund all applications or may only award part of the amount requested. In the event that funding requests exceed available funds, CJD may revise projects to address a more limited focus.

Contact Information

For more information, contact the eGrants help desk at eGrants@gov.texas.gov or (512) 463-1919.