



BJA Fact Sheet

FS 000388 • UPDATED AUGUST 2012

BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE • OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

DENISE E. O'DONNELL, DIRECTOR

Bulletproof Vest Partnership Initiative

By Joseph Husted, BJA Policy Advisor, and
Linda Hammond-Deckard, BJA Policy Advisor

Program Overview

Enacted in 1998 by the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act (Public Law 105-181) and reauthorized by the Bulletproof Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-517), the Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) Program is a U.S. Department of Justice initiative designed to provide critical resources to state, local, and tribal jurisdictions for the sole purpose of purchasing bullet-resistant body armor for sworn law enforcement officers. Administered by the Office of Justice Programs' Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) since 1999, BVP has distributed \$277 million to over 13,000 jurisdictions throughout the nation to assist them in purchasing more than 800,000 bulletproof vests.¹

Through the BVP Program, states, units of local government, and tribal governments are reimbursed for up to 50 percent of the cost of each unit of eligible body armor purchased for law enforcement officers.² Under current legislation, jurisdictions with fewer than 100,000 residents receive priority funding, up to 50 percent of the amount they request. Any remaining funds are distributed on a pro rata basis to jurisdictions with more than 100,000 residents. In order to qualify for this reimbursement, body armor must comply with the most current National Institute of Justice (NIJ) body armor standards, as of the date the body armor was ordered. Information pertaining to the current NIJ standards is available online at the following web page:
www.ojp.gov/nij/topics/technology/body-armor.

The period for submitting applications for BVP funds normally begins during the first quarter of the calendar year.

¹ Office of Justice Programs, retrieved August 2, 2010 from www.ojp.gov/bvpbasi.

² The term *law enforcement officer* refers to any officer, agent, or employee of a state, unit of local government, or federally recognized Indian tribe authorized by law or by a government agency to prevent, detect, or investigate any violation of criminal law, or to supervise criminal offenders. This encompasses full-time, part-time, and auxiliary personnel, whether paid or volunteer, and includes police officers, sheriffs' deputies, correctional officers, parole and probation officers, and pre-trial services officers.

³ National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center, retrieved August 2, 2010 from www.justnet.org/body_armor/index.html.

⁴ IACP/DuPont™ Kevlar® Survivors' Club®, retrieved August 5, 2010 from www2.dupont.com/Kevlar/en_US/uses_apps/protection_vests/survivors_club.html.

⁵ Bureau of Justice Assistance. 2010. *BJA Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Report to Congress: Solutions for Safer Communities*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, NCJ 230348.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

For 30 years, bullet-resistant body armor has protected law enforcement officers from ballistic and non-ballistic incidents.³ As recorded by the IACP/DuPont™ Kevlar® Survivors' Club®, more than 3,000 officers have survived potentially fatal and/or disabling injuries because they were wearing body armor.⁴ In 2009 alone, 13 law enforcement officers were saved when they were involved in a confrontation or a motor vehicle accident. Eleven of the agencies employing these officers have received funds from the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Program.⁵

As a partner with law enforcement agencies across the United States, the Bureau of Justice Assistance takes the

continued on p. 2

KEY POINTS

- The Bulletproof Vest Partnership initiative provides critical resources to state, local, and tribal jurisdictions for the sole purpose of purchasing body armor for sworn law enforcement officers.
- BVP reimburses jurisdictions for up to 50 percent of the cost of each unit of eligible body armor purchased for law enforcement officers.
- All purchased body armor must comply with the most current National Institute of Justice's body armor standards, available at www.ojp.gov/nij/topics/technology/body-armor.
- Applications for BVP funds must be submitted during the annual open application period.

continued on p. 2

MESSAGE (cont.)

issue of officer safety very seriously. The consistent wearing of body armor is similar to the use of seatbelts and should be given the same priority by every jurisdiction. **Body armor, like seatbelts, saves lives.** Beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2011, in order to receive BVP funds, every law enforcement agency **must** have a written mandatory body armor wear policy. A focus on safety should be maintained at all levels within the organization and be reinforced through supervision, training, and policy. We all must strive to reduce preventable injuries and deaths.

We at BJA are honored to administer this program as a way to serve our public safety officers and keep them safe, just as they protect each of us every day.

KEY POINTS (cont.)

- Beginning in FY 2009, during the payment request process, jurisdictions may request, based on financial hardship, a waiver of the 50 percent match requirement. Jurisdictions that request the waiver must cite the nature of the financial hardship and maintain documentation pertaining to the hardship.
- To receive BVP funds, every law enforcement agency **must** implement a written mandatory body armor wear policy. A *mandatory wear concepts and issues paper* and a *model policy* are available by contacting the BVP Customer Support Center at vests@usdoj.gov or toll free at 1-877-758-3787. Only jurisdictions or law enforcement agencies eligible for the BVP Program may receive the *model policy* and *issues paper*.
- More information about the BVP Program is available at www.ojp.gov/bvpbasi.

CONTACT US

Bulletproof Vest Partnership Initiative
Bureau of Justice Assistance
Office of Justice Programs
810 Seventh Street NW.
Washington, DC 20531
Toll free: 1-877-758-3787
E-mail: vests@usdoj.gov
Web site: www.ojp.gov/bvpbasi



Application and Funding Process

The entire application-through-payment process for the BVP Program is managed via the online BVP system. To participate in BVP, state, local, and tribal jurisdictions must follow four simple steps:

1. **Register as a Jurisdiction:** Jurisdictions that have never participated in BVP can register at any time throughout the year by contacting BVP Customer Support at 1-877-758-3787 or via e-mail at vests@usdoj.gov. Only jurisdictions are eligible to receive funding through the BVP Program. If an eligible jurisdiction (states, some counties, and larger local municipalities) has more than one law enforcement agency (LEA), each LEA should register in the BVP system and create its own application, and the aggregate application will be submitted by the jurisdiction on behalf of all of its LEAs. Once registered with the BVP Program, jurisdictions are responsible for regularly updating their own critical information.
2. **Submit Application:** For information on how to apply for funding, please e-mail vests@usdoj.gov. When submitting an application, jurisdictions must make sure to identify the total number, type, and projected cost of vests for all eligible, participating law enforcement officers. Applications may be submitted only during the annual, 6-week open application period.

Funding decisions are made within 3 months after the application period closes. Applicants are notified via e-mail regarding approved funding levels. Unlike other payment programs, funds are not disbursed until the vests are received and the jurisdiction submits a request for payment through the BVP system.

3. **Purchase Vests:** BVP funds may only be used to purchase vests that meet the current NIJ bullet- and stab-resistant body armor standards. Lists of vest models that meet the current NIJ standards are available at the following web pages: www.justnet.org/body_armor/index.html.

Special Note: BVP funds can be used to purchase only one vest per officer during the jurisdiction's stated replacement cycle. BVP funds may be used toward the purchase of tactical-level vests, but if a tactical-level vest is purchased for an officer, it must be the officer's primary vest; a regular-duty vest cannot be purchased for the same officer, during the same replacement cycle, using BVP funds.

4. **Submit Receipt Information:** Once vests are received, jurisdictions can submit a request for payment through the BVP system at www.ojp.gov/bvpbasi. Recipients have up to 2 years from the date of the award to submit payment requests. Once the payment request is submitted, BJA reviews the request for accuracy and processes payments on a monthly schedule.