



BJA Bureau of Justice Assistance Fact Sheet

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Financial Investigations Program

Removing the profits and proceeds from the sale of illegal drugs is an effective part of the law enforcement strategy to disrupt and eliminate drug trafficking conspiracies. Along with arresting and prosecuting the drug trafficker, apprehending and prosecuting the white collar professional who knowingly facilitates money laundering is considered a strong deterrent to other professionals contemplating similar illegal activities.

A powerful tool, investigating the financial aspects of a narcotics trafficking conspiracy requires specialized efforts and resources. Until recently, despite considerable progress made at the Federal level, State and local law enforcement agencies seldom possessed the personnel, expertise, and intelligence data necessary to conduct these unique investigations. Although many States modeled forfeiture and money laundering statutes after Federal laws, only a few State and local agencies used these sanctions effectively because of inadequate financial investigative resources.

Background

The Financial Investigations (Finvest) Program was created in 1989 by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) of the U.S. Department of Justice to help State and local law enforcement agencies implement specialized initiatives to investigate and prosecute narcotics-related financial crimes. The Finvest Program began as a supplemental component of the Organized Crime Narcotics (OCN) Trafficking Enforcement Program, which was initially funded by BJA in 1986. The OCN Program supported Federal, State, and local agencies in a multiagency enforcement and prosecution response against targeted narcotics offenders. The program em-

phasized shared management of resources and joint operational decisionmaking.

Financial investigation components were first added to selected OCN projects in 1987 to more effectively disrupt narcotics trafficking conspiracies by attacking their financial underpinnings. Subsequently, BJA created Finvest as a separate funding demonstration program for financial investigations. It selected Finvest project sites and made direct grant awards to Finvest projects.

Key Program Elements

The Finvest Program focuses on investigations that:

- Determine how funding is raised for the illegal purchase of drugs.
- Identify who provides the funding.
- Determine how profits from illegal drug transactions are laundered.
- Identify profits resulting from illegal drug trafficking.
- Identify assets acquired from illegal drug trafficking.
- Seize assets gained from illegal drug trafficking under the Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organization Act, the Continuing Criminal Enterprise Act, and similar statutes.

Program Strategy and Goals

The Finvest Program strategy is twofold:

- It promotes a multiagency enforcement response and prosecutorial strategy against major narcotics trafficking conspiracies operating throughout a

multijurisdictional area. These conspiracies are targeted for financial investigation, which includes mobilization of the human and technical resources required to pursue the financial investigation, prosecution of individuals involved in the conspiracies, and active involvement of agencies needed to pursue the conspiracies.

- ❑ It also establishes a formal mechanism whereby investigative and prosecutorial resources can be effectively allocated, managed, and focused on targeted offenses and offenders. This management system oversees the shared coordination and direction of personnel, funding, equipment, and technical resources for investigating and prosecuting targeted conspirators.

As a part of the shared management system, cases are assigned for investigation and prosecution after a coordinated effort to identify, select, and prioritize them. The management group then identifies and approves the personnel, financial, and technical resources needed to effectively investigate the targeted offense or offender. On an ongoing basis, the management group monitors case progress and takes appropriate actions regarding investigative activity and case referrals, redirection, and closure.

Finvest Program goals include:

- ❑ Successful investigation, prosecution, and conviction of major multijurisdictional drug trafficking conspirators.
- ❑ Recovery of criminal assets, including assets acquired with funds traceable to criminal activity, assets used in committing the crime, contraband, and stolen property.
- ❑ Reduction of fragmented and duplicative investigations and prosecutions.
- ❑ Increased use of civil remedies.
- ❑ Cooperation and coordination of efforts, as appropriate, between Finvest projects and BJA-funded statewide drug prosecution projects.

Training and Technical Assistance

In addition to funding the model demonstration projects, BJA also provides technical assistance and training workshops and seminars. The workshops and seminars are coordinated and conducted for BJA by the Institute for Intergovernmental Research (IIR) through the BJA-funded Center for Task Force Training (CenTF) Program. IIR is a nonprofit organization that specializes in law enforcement and criminal justice issues.

The 2-day Financial Investigative Techniques Training Workshop is a basic-level course designed to provide law enforcement officers with the skills necessary to conduct investigations of money-related crimes. No specialized fiscal or accounting skills are required for enrollment. After completing the course, the officer will be able to access various sources of financial information, use techniques to conduct covert and overt financial inquiries, establish probable cause for financial search warrants, locate and identify hidden assets, find and interpret documentary evidence of financial transactions, and construct a source-and-application-of-funds schedule. The workshop covers the following topics:

- ❑ Development of overt and covert investigative skills.
- ❑ Use of public record sources.
- ❑ Location of hidden assets.
- ❑ Procedures for asset seizure and forfeiture.

In 1996, the Financial Investigative Techniques Training Workshop schedule is as follows:

January 31–Feb.1	Atlanta, GA
February 28–29	Las Vegas, NV
March 20–21	Shreveport, LA
April 3–4	Tallahassee, FL
May 1–2	Albany, NY
May 30–31	Springfield, MA
June 5–6	Cleveland, OH
June 19–20	San Francisco, CA
July 10–11	Salt Lake City, UT
August 7–8	Missoula, MT
September 11–12	Portland, OR
September 25–26	Charleston, WV
October 9–10	Little Rock, AR
November 6–7	Topeka, KS

Additional Publications

The BJA-funded monograph *Narcotics-Related Financial Investigations: Lessons Learned From the Finvest Program Model* recounts the origin and strategy of the Finvest Program, as well as its desired and actual operational results; describes briefly each of the Finvest projects; and addresses project initiation and development, presenting lessons learned from the program ex-

perience. The monograph is intended to serve as an implementation guide for initiating similar efforts to investigate financial aspects of narcotics crimes.

This publication (NCJ 148215) can be obtained by contacting the BJA Clearinghouse at the telephone number or address provided below.

For Further Information

For more information about the program or workshop registration, contact:

Institute for Intergovernmental Research

2888 Remington Green

P.O. Box 12729

Tallahassee, FL 32317

Tel: 1-800-446-0912 or 1-904-385-0600

For other program information, contact:

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