



NOV 03

NIJ

Solicitation

**General Forensics
Research and Development
Call for White Papers**

Notice:

You *must* submit your application using the Office of Justice Programs' automated Grants Management System. Paper applications will not be accepted. We suggest you begin the process as soon as possible. To start the process, go to <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/fundopps.htm>.

Deadline:

January 6, 2004

SL 000637

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
810 Seventh Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20531

John Ashcroft
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Office of Justice Programs
National Institute of Justice
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>

General Forensics Research and Development: Call for White Papers

I. Introduction

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. The Institute provides objective, independent, evidence-based knowledge and tools to enhance the administration of justice and public safety. The Institute solicits proposals to inform its search for the knowledge and tools to guide policy and practice.

With this solicitation, NIJ seeks proposals in the form of white papers for research and development to enhance the methods crime laboratories use to examine evidence. The solicitation focuses on—

1. Faster, more reliable, more widely applicable, more rugged, less costly, or less labor-intensive tools for identification, collection, preservation, or analysis of crime scene evidence. (**Note:** *Special consideration will be given to the development of miniaturized or portable forensic testing devices.*)
2. Tools that can increase the discriminatory power of forensic analyses or provide quantitative or statistical data that can increase the power of a match.
3. Identification or characterization of new analytes of forensic importance.

White papers **must** target one of the following forensic disciplines: Controlled Substances, Toxicology, Trace Evidence, or Impression Evidence.

Due date: The due date is listed on the cover of this announcement and on the NIJ Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm>. Extensions to the deadline are generally not granted.

Page limit: The program narrative section of your white paper must not exceed 6 double-spaced pages in 12-point font with 1-inch margins. Tables, charts, figures, appendixes, and government forms do not count toward the 6-page limit.

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.

How to submit proposals to NIJ: Complete details about how to apply for funding are in “NIJ Guidelines for Submitting Applications,” available on the NIJ Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm>.

II. Proposal Topics

Forensic science includes the application of established scientific techniques to the identification, collection, and examination of evidence from crime scenes, the interpretation of laboratory findings, and the presentation of findings in judicial proceedings. Forensic evidence has played a crucial role in the investigation and resolution of thousands of violent crimes throughout the decades, and its value as an investigative tool is likely to increase in the coming years.

The fields encompassing the forensic sciences have greatly benefitted from the advances brought about by breakthroughs in broader areas of science and technology in recent years. As a result, it has become possible to characterize evidence from a crime scene with increased speed and accuracy using ever smaller sample sizes. Despite the advances, crime laboratories typically suffer from demand that far exceeds capacity and would benefit greatly from new or improved tools and innovations that can be validated, quality controlled, quality assured, and implemented for forensic use. Additional research and development is needed to maximize the technologies available for transfer to public crime labs for the examination of crime scene samples that are often of diminished quality and limited quantity.

Applicants to this solicitation must demonstrate an appreciation of and general familiarity with existing forensic technologies related to the proposed research. They must also demonstrate knowledge of the costs of implementing and maintaining the proposed technology and training required. NIJ **strongly** encourages researchers to seek guidance from or partner with State or local crime laboratories. Such associations foster a greater understanding of the issues unique to the field of forensic science and may strengthen the scope of the proposed research plan.

A. Areas of Research

Tools and technologies that will allow faster, more reliable, more widely applicable, more rugged, less costly, or less labor-intensive identification, collection, preservation, or analysis of forensic evidence and/or interpretation of analytical data. These tools can include but are not limited to—

- Improved methods to locate and/or identify probative forensic evidence at crime scenes.
- Improved methods to collect, preserve, and/or transport forensic evidence from crime scenes.

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- Analytical equipment for field use.
 - Expert systems.

Note: *White papers to develop miniaturized, rugged, or portable tools for forensic testing will be given particular priority under this solicitation.*

- Tools that can reveal additional or more discriminatory information about the forensic evidence or provide quantitative or statistical data that can increase the power of a match.
- Identification and/or characterization of new analytes with potential forensic use.

Note: *White papers must target one of the following forensic disciplines: Controlled Substances, Toxicology, Trace Evidence, or Impression Evidence.*

B. Guidance for submitting white papers

Under this solicitation, NIJ is asking that you propose a project through a 6-page white paper that captures the essence of a full proposal. “NIJ Guidelines for Submitting Applications” and the Office of Justice Programs’ Grants Management System (GMS) handbook describe the process for submitting applications for full proposals, not white papers. (The main differences between a white paper and a full proposal are page count and amount of detail in the budget. White papers are much shorter than full proposals and do not contain detailed budgets.)

Your white paper should state the problem under investigation (including goals and objectives of the proposed project) and the anticipated relevance of the project to public policy, practice, or theory. Although the white paper should not include a detailed budget or management plan, it should include an estimate of the funding required, summarized by task, and a general timeframe for completion of those tasks and the project as a whole.

Review process. Peer reviewers will evaluate each white paper, and based on their recommendations, NIJ staff will invite authors of select white papers to submit full applications. Use section “III. General Requirements and Guidance” as a framework for your white paper because it will be the framework for your full proposal if you are invited to submit one.

Using GMS for white papers. GMS does not consider an application complete until three files are loaded: (1) Program Narrative, (2) Budget Detail Worksheet and Narrative, and (3) Other Program Attachments. Upload your white paper into the Program Narrative box. White

papers do not have Budget Detail Worksheets and Narratives and do not have Other Program Attachments. Hence, you should upload blank files into those boxes in GMS.

III. General Requirements and Guidance

This section describes the main requirements for submitting your proposal. Complete instructions are in “NIJ Guidelines for Submitting Applications,” available on the NIJ Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm>.

- A. Submit applications online:** Paper applications are not accepted. Applications must be submitted through the Office of Justice Programs’ online Grants Management System. NIJ suggests you begin the process early, especially if this is the first time you have used the system. To begin, go to <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/fundopps.htm>.
- B. 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 will use it. While a partnership may affect State or local activities, it should also have broader implications for others across the country.
- C. Cofunding is not required:** You are not required to combine NIJ funds with other funds (for example, you do not need matching funds), but if you intend to use multiple funding sources to support your proposed effort, the budget you submit must show the other funds.
- D. Number of grants to be awarded:** NIJ’s grant award process is highly competitive. The number of awards to be made depends on the availability of funds and the number and quality of applications received.
- E. When awards will be made:** The review and approval process takes about 6 months. Therefore, you should not propose to begin work until at least 6 months after the 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>.
- F. Financial audits are required:** If your organization spends \$500,000 or more of Federal funds during the fiscal year, you may be asked to submit an organization-wide financial and compliance audit report before any award is made. The audit must be performed in accordance with the U.S. General Accounting Office Government Accounting Standards and

must conform to Chapter 19 of the Office of Justice Programs' *Financial Guide* (available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/FinGuide>). You may include the costs of complying with these audits in the proposed budget submitted as part of your application. Detailed information regarding the independent audit is available in Office of Management and Budget Circular A-133 (available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars>).

- G. An environmental assessment may be required:** All award recipients must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). To ensure NEPA compliance, NIJ may require some award recipients to submit additional information.
- H. 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. NIJ will use the DUNS number throughout the grant life cycle. Obtaining a DUNS number is a free, 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.
- I. What will *not* be funded:** Typically, NIJ *does not* fund the following:
1. Provision of training or direct service.
 2. Proposals to evaluate, validate, or implement existing forensic technologies; proposals lacking a research and/or development component; or proposals that are otherwise nonresponsive to the general goals of this solicitation.
- J. Funds cannot be used to lobby:** Under the Anti-Lobbying Act (18 U.S.C. § 1913), grantees generally may not use funds to support the enactment, repeal, or modification of any law, regulation, or policy at any level of government. For the complete rules and regulations, see "NIJ Guidelines for Submitting Applications" at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm> and OJP's *Financial Guide* at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/FinGuide>.
- K. Call for assistance:**
1. For technical guidance about using the Grants Management System, call the hotline at 1-888-549-9901.
 2. For questions about this solicitation, the research being solicited, or other NIJ funding opportunities, contact the U.S. Department of Justice Response Center at 1-800-421-6770.

IV. Selection Criteria

NIJ is firmly committed to the competitive process in awarding grants. All proposals are subjected to an independent peer-review panel evaluation. 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 evaluate each proposal and give their assessments to NIJ. NIJ staff then recommend to the NIJ Director which proposals are most worthy of an award. The Director makes final award decisions.

Successful applicants must demonstrate the following:

A. Understanding of the problem and its importance. Include appropriate scientific and legal citations to demonstrate awareness of the problem and the potential contribution the proposed research will make to the forensic community.

B. 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).

C. 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).

D. 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).

E. 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.

F. 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.

V. Requirements for Successful Applicants

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

- A. Final 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 report will be peer reviewed upon submission. The reviews will be forwarded to the principal investigator with suggestions for revisions. The principal investigator 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 format.

For evaluation studies, the 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.)

- B. Interim reports:** Grantees must submit quarterly financial reports, semi-annual progress reports, and a final progress report. Future awards and fund drawdowns may be withheld if reports are delinquent. Post-award reporting requirements are described in “NIJ Guidelines for Submitting Applications,” available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm>.
- C. Documents that protect the confidentiality of information and human subjects:** Federal regulations require applicants for NIJ funding to outline specific procedures for protecting private information about individuals as part of the Privacy Certificate submitted with the application package. For complete details, see “NIJ Guidelines for Submitting Applications,” available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm>.
- D. Electronic data:** Some grant recipients will be required to submit electronic data and supporting documentation, such as a codebook or dictionary, capable of being re-analyzed and used by other researchers. The materials must be submitted by the end date of the grant. Grant applicants should ensure that the proposed timeline and budget accommodate these requirements.
- E. Performance guidelines:** NIJ collects data to comply with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), Public Law 103-62. Generally, these data are contained in a grantee’s final report (discussed in Section V of this solicitation), but NIJ may request additional information to facilitate future planning and to ensure accurate reporting to Congress and others on the measurable results of grants. For complete details, see “NIJ Guidelines for Submitting Applications,” available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm>.

Tips for Submitting Your Application

1. Begin the application process early—especially if you have never used the online Grants Management System before. NIJ will not accept applications received after the closing date and time listed on the cover. To start the process, go to:
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/fundopps.htm>.
2. Review “NIJ Guidelines for Submitting Applications” for complete instructions, available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm>.
3. Although your proposal may budget for the purchase of equipment if the equipment is necessary to conduct the project, NIJ will not fund applications that are primarily to purchase equipment, materials, or supplies.
4. Call for help:
 - For technical guidance about the Grants Management System, call the hotline at 1-888-549-9901.
 - For questions about this solicitation, the research being solicited, or other NIJ funding opportunities, contact the U.S. Department of Justice Response Center at 1-800-421-6770.

View or print a copy of this document from the NIJ Web site (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/funding.htm>) or request one by calling NCJRS at 1-800-851-3420 or e-mailing askncjrs@ncjrs.org.

The National Institute of Justice is the research, development, and evaluation agency of the U.S. Department of Justice.

NIJ provides objective, independent, evidence-based knowledge and tools to enhance the administration of justice and public safety.

NIJ is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime.