



The [U.S. Department of Justice](#) (DOJ), [Office of Justice Programs](#) (OJP), [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#) (BJS) is seeking applications for FY 2015 National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP). This program furthers the Department's mission to enhance the crime fighting and criminal justice capabilities of state and tribal governments by improving the accuracy, utility, and interstate accessibility of criminal history records and enhancing records of protective orders involving domestic violence and stalking, automated identification systems and other state systems supporting national records systems and their use for criminal history background checks. The focus of this year's program is on assisting states and tribes to find ways to make more records available to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), including records in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), criminal history record information available through the Interstate Identification Index (III), and records in the NICS Index. For the purpose of this solicitation, the term "state" includes the District of Columbia and U.S. territories.

FY 2015 National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP)

Eligibility

Eligible applicants are limited to the agency designated by the governor in each state to administer the NCHIP program and federally recognized Indian tribal governments, as determined by the Secretary of the Interior, that support initiatives to improve the functioning of the criminal justice system. States and tribes may choose to submit applications as part of a multi-state consortium, multi-tribe consortium, or other entity. In such cases, please contact your BJS program manager for further information.

BJS welcomes applications that involve two or more entities; however, one eligible entity must be the applicant and the others must be proposed as subrecipients. The applicant must be the entity with primary responsibility for administering the NCHIP program. Only one application per lead applicant will be considered; however, subrecipients may be part of multiple proposals.

For additional eligibility information, see Section [C. Eligibility Information](#).

Deadline

Applicants must register with [Grants.gov](#) prior to submitting an application. All applications are due to be submitted and in receipt of a successful validation message in Grants.gov by 11:59 time p.m. eastern time on April 20, 2015.

All applicants are encouraged to read this [Important Notice: Applying for Grants in Grants.gov](#).

For additional information, see [How to Apply](#) in section D. Application and Submission Information.

Contact Information

For technical assistance with submitting an application, contact the Grants.gov Customer Support Hotline at 800-518-4726 or 606-545-5035, or via e-mail to support@grants.gov. The Grants.gov Support Hotline hours of operation are 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, except federal holidays.

Applicants that experience unforeseen Grants.gov technical issues beyond their control that prevent them from submitting their application by the deadline must e-mail the BJS contact identified below **within 24 hours after the application deadline** and request approval to submit their application. Additional information on reporting technical issues is found under “Experiencing Unforeseen Grants.gov Technical Issues” in the [How to Apply](#) section.

For assistance with any other requirements of this solicitation, contact Devon B. Adams, Chief, Criminal Justice Data Improvement Program, by telephone at 202-307-0765, or by e-mail at askbjs@usdoj.gov. Include “NCHIP15” in the subject line.

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FY 2015 National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP) (CFDA #16.554)

A. Program Description

Overview

BJS is publishing this notice to announce the continuation of the National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP) in Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, identify the program priorities, and provide information on application requirements.

The goal of the NCHIP grant program is to improve the nation's safety and security by enhancing the quality, completeness, and accessibility of criminal history record information and by ensuring the nationwide implementation of criminal justice and noncriminal justice background check systems. Achieving this goal is contingent on accomplishing four objectives:

- providing direct financial and technical assistance to states and tribes to improve their criminal records systems and other related systems in an effort to support background checks;
- ensuring the infrastructure is developed to connect criminal history records systems to the state record repository or appropriate federal agency record system and ensuring records are accessible through the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) records systems;
- providing the training and technical assistance needed to ensure that records systems are developed and managed to conform to FBI standards, and appropriate technologies, while ensuring that contributing agencies adhere to the highest standards of practice with respect to privacy and confidentiality; and
- using systematic evaluation and standardized performance measurement and statistics to assess progress made in improving national records holdings and background check systems.

The NCHIP program serves as an umbrella for various record improvement activities and funding streams, each of which has unique goals and objectives. As a basic principle of this program, BJS strongly encourages states and tribes to ensure the integrated functioning of record improvement initiatives, regardless of the funding source. Also, BJS strongly encourages applicants to match or leverage the federal funds provided with other resources to the maximum extent possible.

Authorizing legislation

In the past, appropriations for the NCHIP program have been made pursuant to the Crime Identification Technology Act of 1998 and the procedures for applying for NCHIP grants generally reflect the provisions of that Act. The NCHIP program implements the grant provisions of—

- The Crime Identification Technology Act of 1998 (CITA), Pub. L. No. 105-251, 112 Stat.1871 (1998), codified at 42 USC Section 14601 et seq.;
- The Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act (Brady Act), Pub. L. No. 103-159, 107 Stat.1536 (1993), codified as amended at 18 U.S.C. Section 921 et seq.;
- The National Child Protection Act of 1993 (NCPA), Pub. L. No. 103-209, 107 Stat. 2490 (1993), codified as amended at 42 U.S.C. Sections 3759, 5101 note, 5119, 5119a, 5119b, 5119c;
- those provisions of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (Omnibus Act), Pub. L. No. 90-351, 82 Stat. 197 (1968), codified as amended at 42 U.S.C. Section 3711 et seq., as amended; and the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (Violent Crime Control Act), Pub. L. No.103-322, 108 Stat. 1796 (1994), codified as amended at 42 U.S.C. Section 13701 et seq.; which pertain to the establishment, maintenance, analysis, or use of criminal history records and criminal record systems;
- relevant requirements of the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children and Sexually Violent Offender Registration Act, Pub. L. No. 103-322, 108 Stat. 2038, Megan's Law, Pub. L. No. 104-145, 110 Stat. 1345, and the Pam Lychner Sexual Offender Tracking and Identification Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-236, 110 Stat. 3093; and Title 1 of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, Pub L. 109-248;
- The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, Pub. L. No. 106-386, 114 Stat. 1464 (2000), and related laws pertaining to the identification, collection, analysis and interstate exchange of records relating to domestic violence and stalking (including protection orders);
- The Violence Against Women Act of 1994, codified as amended at 42 U.S.C. Section 14031 et seq.;
- The Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005, Pub. L. No. 109-162, 119 Stat 2960 (2006); and
- relevant requirements of the Tribal Law and Order Act, Pub. L. No. 111-211, 124 Stat 2299, Section 251(b)(1) (2010).

Eligibility

The NCHIP application must be submitted by the agency designated by the governor to administer the NCHIP program or a federally recognized Indian tribe. States and tribes may choose to submit applications as part of a multi-state consortium, multi-tribe consortium, or other entity. In such cases, please contact your BJS program manager for further information. Also, as required by Crime Identification Technology Act of 1998 (CITA) under 42 USC 14601(c), to be eligible to receive an NCHIP grant, the application must specifically assure that the state, territory, or tribe—

1. has the capability to contribute pertinent information to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) established under section 103(b) of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act (18 U.S.C. 922 note).

2. is or will be following a comprehensive strategy for information sharing systems to improve the functioning of the criminal justice system, with an emphasis on integration of all criminal justice components, law enforcement, courts, prosecution, corrections, and probation and parole. Further, the strategy must be developed in consultation with appropriate federal, state, or local officials, with emphasis on the recommendation of officials whose duty it is to oversee, plan, and implement integrated information technology systems, and contain—
 - a. definition and analysis of “integration” in the jurisdictions developing integrated information sharing systems;
 - b. an assessment of the criminal justice resources being devoted to information technology;
 - c. resource needs;
 - d. federal, state, regional, local, and tribal information technology coordination requirements; and
 - e. priorities for planning and implementation of information technology systems.
3. coordinates the programs funded by NCHIP with other federally funded information technology programs, including directly funded local programs.
4. assures that the individuals who developed the grant application took into consideration the needs of all branches of the government and **specifically sought the advice of the chief of the highest court of the jurisdiction, with respect to the application.**

(See “Additional Attachments” on Page 23)

Message from the BJS Director

Dear NCHIP Contact:

The National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP) continues the Justice Department’s efforts, initiated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in 1924, to build an accurate and useful national system of criminal records. Availability of complete computerized criminal records is vital for criminal investigations, prosecutorial charging, sentencing decisions, correctional supervision and release, and background checks for those applying for licenses, handgun purchases, and work involving the safety and well-being of children, the elderly, and the disabled. Administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCHIP is an umbrella program to assist states in meeting evolving requirements concerning criminal histories and related records such as protective orders and prohibiting mental health information. The program began in 1995 and has provided nearly \$600 million to states and U.S. territories for these purposes to date.

Congressional appropriations for FY 2015 at \$48 million represent a renewed commitment on the part of Congress and the Administration to deploy federal resources that help states reduce gun violence in their communities. This investment is intended to strengthen the national background check system by assisting states and tribes in finding ways to make more records

available to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), especially mental health records, thereby addressing gaps in the federal and state records currently available to NICS. Those gaps significantly hinder the ability of NICS to quickly and accurately confirm whether a prospective purchaser is prohibited from acquiring a firearm, and undermine the effectiveness of criminal background checks performed for other purposes. Access to accurate and complete criminal history record information is also essential for background checks associated with national security, employment, licensing, and other purposes.¹

This year's solicitation for the NCHIP program, therefore, places great emphasis on helping states find ways to make more records available to NICS, including criminal history record information available through the Interstate Identification Index (III); records in the National Crime Information Center (NCIC); and, records in the NICS Index. In other words, an essential outcome of funded activities is that they result in more records being available in these systems.

As in the past, another essential consideration for BJS in evaluating applications will be how well proposed projects relate to the state's or tribe's situation relative to the key priority areas. Therefore, your applications should include a self-assessment in these areas:

- **Dispositions available to III.** All applicants should discuss the percentage of state records with final dispositions or case outcomes linked to arrests that are available. Applicants should provide information on efforts to improve reporting and availability at the national level. The application should also discuss the extent to which dispositions requested in connection with a NICS inquiry have not been provided within the required timeframe and must identify any problems that are delaying instant responses to NICS inquiries and identify proposed solutions to these problems.
- **NICS Index and mental health record availability.** All applications should discuss the extent to which the applicant provides information to the FBI's NICS Index. Applicants that do not submit information to this file should describe the prohibiting factors and any plans to overcome them. [Note: HIPPA is not considered to be a prohibiting factor.] Additionally, all applicants should indicate whether mental health records are checked, either by the state POC or the FBI, during a NICS check. Where mental health records are accessible, include the number of records currently available and any plans to improve availability. If mental health records are not currently accessible at the time of a background check, describe factors which limit or prohibit exchange of mental health records. States that are not currently eligible for funding under the NICS Act Record Improvement Program (NARIP) should discuss plans, if any, to establish a relief from disabilities program and work toward eligibility. If a state has no immediate plans to pursue development of a relief program, include a statement outlining the reasons for not pursuing one.
- **Protection order records.** All applicants should indicate whether they submit information for inclusion in the FBI's NCIC Protection Order File. Applicants that submit protection orders should indicate the number of active protection orders provided to the FBI for the last full calendar year. Applicants that do not submit all active protection orders to NCIC should describe the prohibiting factors and any plans to overcome them.

¹ See, for example, 5 U.S.C. 9101.

- **Warrants/wanted person records.** All applicants should indicate whether they submit information for inclusion in the FBI's NCIC Wanted Persons File. Applicants that submit such records should indicate the number provided to the FBI for the last full calendar year. Applicants that do not submit such records should describe the prohibiting factors and any plans to overcome them.

As in previous years, NCHIP will support the acquisition of Livescan equipment for state and local agencies, but **only** where the funds can be justified on the basis of geographic, population, traffic, or other related factors, and only when the jurisdiction has established an Automated Fingerprint Information System (AFIS) and either has implemented or is implementing procedures to ensure that the AFIS is compatible with FBI Next Generation Identification (NGI) standards. Regarding NGI (formerly known as IAFIS), NCHIP funds should not be requested for activities or procurements that primarily improve law enforcement investigative capabilities associated with NGI participation because such uses fall outside NCHIP funding priorities. The overall objective of funded NCHIP activities must result in improvements to the quality, completeness, and availability of records in national record systems.

Finally, as you begin preparing an application, I urge you to carefully review the required elements under "What an Application Should Include" (particularly all elements listed under the program narrative) as well as the "Selection Criteria" described in this program announcement. As always, BJS stands ready to help you in the application process and we look forward to the continued improvement of the nation's criminal records that has resulted from our nearly 20-year partnership with the NCHIP program.

William J. Sabol
Director

Program-Specific Information

Goals, Objectives, and Deliverables

NCHIP was initiated in 1995 and has encompassed evolving efforts to support state activities for the establishment of records systems and the collection and use of criminal history and related records. Pursuant to 42 USC § 3732(c), BJS is authorized to "provide for improvements in the accuracy, quality, timeliness, immediate accessibility, and integration of state criminal history and related records, support the development and enhancement of national systems of criminal history and related records, including the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), and the records of the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), facilitate state participation in national records and information systems, and support statistical research for critical analysis of the improvement and utilization of criminal history records." NCHIP and the NICS Act Record Improvement Program (NARIP) are one means by which BJS provides for such improvements.

The National Sex Offender Registry Assistance Program (NSOR-AP) was added to NCHIP in FY 1998, with a \$25 million appropriation to help states upgrade sex offender registries consistent with federal and state standards and to provide data to the FBI's National Sex Offender Registry. Since FY 1999, funding for state sex offender registries has been covered under the general NCHIP.

As part of the Violent Crime Control Act, the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 authorized a total of \$6 million for FY 1996 through FY 1998 to improve processes for entering data on stalking and domestic violence into local, state, and national databases. The funds were incorporated into and awarded under the NCHIP program during those years. This program was reauthorized by the Violence Against Women Act of 2000 (Pub. L. No. 106-386, Section 8) at \$3 million per year for FY 2001 through FY 2006, and funding was reinstated in FY 2002. The Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005 (Pub. L. No. 109-162, Section 109) authorized appropriations for the program at \$3 million per year for each of FY 2007 through FY 2011.

To date, all states, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories have received funds under NCHIP. Federally recognized tribes are also eligible to apply for funds under NCHIP. Further information about the history of NCHIP and its accomplishments are available at www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=47. NCHIP has provided support to states in the following areas:

- improving disposition reporting and support for courts;
- facilitating participation in the Interstate Identification Index (III);
- improving record automation and fingerprint data;
- increasing participation in the (NICS);
- creating, updating, and enhancing sex offender registries; and
- improving identification and access to domestic violence records or protection orders.

Issues and Needs to be Addressed

Despite the tremendous progress made toward criminal record improvements, several significant shortcomings remain:

- Many arrest records available through III—excluding those for the 18 states participating in the National Fingerprint File (NFF) —are missing case outcome information in the FBI’s Criminal History File. Missing case disposition information also continues to plague many record systems. It remains vitally important that the courts and prosecutors be major players in the development of improvements to criminal records systems. The involvement of these officials is key to helping ensure the timely and accurate transmittal of disposition information, including non-prosecution outcomes, to criminal record repositories.
- Many entities are not submitting all available qualifying records to the NICS Index.
- Some entities are not yet submitting all qualifying records to the (NCIC) Protection Order File, and the FBI reports continued problems with the appropriate flagging of protection orders regarding the prohibition for firearm purchases.

This year’s NCHIP solicitation focuses on assisting states and tribes to find ways to make more records available to NICS, including records in the NCIC, criminal history record information available through the III, and records in the NICS Index. Therefore, an essential outcome of funded activities is that they result in more records being available in these systems.

Priority Areas For Grant Funding

Through this competitive solicitation, BJS invites applications from states, territories, and tribes that (1) propose projects that specifically and directly address one or more of the priority areas identified below, and (2) to the maximum extent possible, propose to match or leverage the NCHIP award with other resources.

Additionally, states are strongly encouraged to develop or update long-range record improvement plans to assess quality and completeness issues and identify gaps in record reporting and availability with the goal of developing strategies to significantly reduce or eliminate these gaps. Such plans should include ongoing research, analysis, data quality auditing or similar work that can set quantifiable improvement goals and monitor performance achievement.

1. Updating and automating case outcomes from courts and prosecutors in state records and the FBI's Criminal History File.

Allowable costs may include activities such as—

- a. implementing or upgrading record systems that facilitate immediate identification of disposition records, provided the records are accessible for criminal history inquiries at the state and national level;
- b. implementing improved criminal history record capture procedures, including complete arrest reporting and researching missing dispositions, provided that the captured data are subsequently included in relevant state and federal files;
- c. ensuring that criminal history record information is shared with investigative service providers (ISPs) for national security and other purposes pursuant to Title 5 U.S.C. Sec. 9101;
- d. ensuring that records of all criminal events starting with an arrest or indictment are included in background check files, perhaps through data analysis focused on the completeness of criminal history records;
- e. automating the interface between the record repository and prosecutors, courts, and corrections, including the development of relevant information exchange package documentation based on the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM);
- f. capturing data on domestic violence misdemeanor convictions;
- g. capturing data on persons convicted of abuse of children, the elderly, and the disabled and/or stalking and domestic violence offenses (including protection orders and violations thereof);
- h. submitting disposition information to the FBI via the (III) Message Key (MKE), Machine Readable Data (MRD) process, or other methods of transmission accepted by the FBI;
- i. reducing any backlog of missing court dispositions, provided the dispositions are accessible for criminal history inquiries at the state and national level;

- j. implementing the standardized RAP sheet format, which relies on NIEM, and assisting states in converting criminal history records to the standard interstate RAP sheet format or developing electronic interchange capabilities related thereto;
- k. converting manual or other non-automated records to electronic records;
- l. establishing more effective accuracy and information quality controls;
- m. converting juvenile records to the adult system (federal regulations allow the FBI to accept juvenile records if submitted by the state or local arresting agency);
- n. upgrading equipment to directly improve availability of data where appropriate, given the level of data completeness and participation in national records systems **(the ongoing and/or maintenance costs associated with any such equipment are allowable only for the first 12-month period)**;
- o. purchasing Livescan equipment for local agencies where the funds can be justified on the basis of geographic, population, traffic, or other related factors, and only when the jurisdiction has established an AFIS and either has implemented or is implementing procedures to ensure that the AFIS is compatible with FBI Next Generation Identification (NGI) standards **(the ongoing and/or maintenance costs associated with any such equipment are allowable only for the first 12-month period)**; and
- p. ensuring compatibility with federal record systems, such as III, and implementing integrated system strategies that interface all components of the criminal justice system, including law enforcement, prosecutors, courts, and corrections, to the extent that such expenditures improve the availability of criminal record data, and provided that any systems funded are compatible with FBI standards for national data systems, such as NIBRS, NCIC, NICS, and NGI (formerly IAFIS). However, NCHIP funds may not be used to support studies, analysis, design, or development of integrated systems strategies. Funds should not be used to primarily improve law enforcement investigative capabilities associated with NGI participation (e.g. latent workstation, palm prints).

2. Automating access to information concerning persons prohibited from possessing or receiving a firearm and transmitting relevant records to III, NCIC, and the NICS Index, including persons who have been adjudicated as a mental defective or have been committed to a mental institution; are unlawful users of, or addicted to, any controlled substance; are the subject of protection or restraining orders; or have been convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence.

Allowable costs may include activities such as—

- a. identifying and developing access to data on persons prohibited from firearm purchases under the Gun Control Act (18 U.S.C. Section 922), as amended by the Brady Act;
- b. participating in the FBI's Identification for Firearms Sales (IFFS) program, which is a system for flagging III records for the immediate and accurate identification of convicted felons;

- c. enabling the state to serve as a Point of Contact (POC) under the NICS system (including costs of equipment, software, personnel training, and development and implementation of related operating and administrative procedures). However, funds may not be used to cover ongoing costs of presale firearm background checks, but may be used to pay costs associated with capturing dispositions in response to a specific NICS inquiry, provided that the captured data are entered into the automated state and FBI systems, thus serving to upgrade the permanent quality of the records systems;
- d. instituting programming or operational changes in records management necessary to comply with the requirements for NICS record-keeping and reporting the status of transactions; and
- e. establishing electronic interfaces or information exchanges between criminal history records, sex offender registry, and civil protection order files to ensure that, consistent with state law, a complete data review is possible in connection with background checks for child care or other authorized purposes. Funds may be used to develop software to establish protocols to permit interface between the criminal history record system, the state sex offender registry, and related protection order files, including files of civil protection orders.

3. Full participation in the III and National Fingerprint File (NFF), including adoption and implementation of the National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact.

Allowable costs may include activities such as—

- a. paying reasonable costs associated with the adoption and implementation of the National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact, including those associated with state review and enactment of the Compact, and the development and implementation of procedures (including purchase of equipment and development of software) necessary to facilitate operations pursuant to Compact protocols, including those relating to participation in the FBI's (NFF);
- b. automating criminal record databases;
- c. synchronizing records between the state and the FBI; and
- d. developing software and hardware necessary to enable electronic access to state records on an intrastate or interstate basis.

Evidence-Based Programs or Practices

OJP strongly emphasizes the use of data and evidence in policy making and program development in criminal justice, juvenile justice, and crime victim services. OJP is committed to—

- improving the quantity and quality of evidence OJP generates;
- integrating evidence into program, practice, and policy decisions within OJP and the field; and
- improving the translation of evidence into practice.

OJP considers programs and practices to be evidence-based when their effectiveness has been demonstrated by causal evidence, generally obtained through one or more outcome evaluations. Causal evidence documents a relationship between an activity or intervention (including technology) and its intended outcome, including measuring the direction and size of a change and the extent to which a change may be attributed to the activity or intervention. Causal evidence depends on the use of scientific methods to rule out, to the extent possible, alternative explanations for the documented change. The strength of causal evidence, based on the factors described above, will influence the degree to which OJP considers a program or practice to be evidence-based. The [OJP CrimeSolutions.gov](http://OJP.CrimeSolutions.gov) website is one resource that applicants may use to find information about evidence-based programs in criminal justice, juvenile justice, and crime victim services.

B. Federal Award Information

FY 2015 NCHIP awards will be “new” awards as opposed to supplemental awards, and will be made for up to 18 months. Since the program builds on long-term NCHIP activity, grantees will have the flexibility to begin funded activities immediately on receipt of the award or as late as October 1, 2015. All activities must be scheduled to be completed by March 31, 2017. FY 2015 projects may overlap with FY 2014 projects or may run consecutively.

BJS is unable to estimate the number of awards to be made or the maximum amount awarded per state. The number and amount of awards will be totally dependent on the extent to which the projects proposed address the program priority areas and the demonstrated level of need.

All awards are subject to the availability of appropriated funds and to any modifications or additional requirements that may be imposed by law. The FY 2015 appropriation is \$48 million.

Type of Award²

BJS expects that it will make any award from this NCHIP solicitation in the form of a cooperative agreement, which is a particular type of grant used because BJS expects to have ongoing substantial involvement in award activities. Substantial involvement includes direct oversight and involvement with the grantee organization in implementation of the grant, but does not involve day-to-day project management. See [Administrative, National Policy, and other Legal Requirements](#), under Section [F. Federal Award Administration](#), for details regarding the federal involvement anticipated under an award from this NCHIP solicitation.

Financial Management and System of Internal Controls

If selected for funding, the award recipient must:

(a) Establish and maintain effective internal control over the Federal award that provides reasonable assurance that the non-Federal entity is managing the Federal award in compliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the Federal award. These internal controls should be in compliance with guidance in “Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government” issued by the Comptroller General of the United States and the “Internal

² See generally 31 U.S.C. §§ 6301-6305 (defines and describes various forms of federal assistance relationships, including grants and cooperative agreements (a type of grant)).

Control Integrated Framework”, issued by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO).

(b) Comply with Federal statutes, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the Federal awards.

(c) Evaluate and monitor the non-Federal entity's compliance with statute, regulations and the terms and conditions of Federal awards.

(d) Take prompt action when instances of noncompliance are identified including noncompliance identified in audit findings.

(e) Take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other information the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity designates as sensitive or the non-Federal entity considers sensitive consistent with applicable Federal, state and local laws regarding privacy and obligations of confidentiality.

In order to better understand administrative requirements and cost principles, award applicants are encouraged to enroll, at no charge, in the Department of Justice Grants Financial Management Online Training available [here](#).

Budget Information

Cost Sharing or Match Requirement (cash or in-kind)

Federal funds awarded under this program may not cover more than 90% of the total costs of the project. Applicants must identify the source of the 10% non-federal portion of the total project costs and how they will use match funds. If a successful applicant’s proposed match exceeds the required match amount, and OJP approves the budget, the total match amount incorporated into the approved budget becomes mandatory and subject to audit. (Match is restricted to the same uses of funds as allowed for the federal funds.) Applicants may satisfy this match requirement with either cash or in-kind services. The formula for calculating the match is—

$$\frac{\text{Federal Award Amount}}{\text{Federal Share Percentage}} = \text{Adjusted (Total) Project Costs}$$

Required Recipient’s Share Percentage x Adjusted Project Cost = Required Match

Example: Calculate a 90%/10% match requirement for a federal award amount of \$500,000 match as follows:

$$\frac{\$500,000}{90\%} = \$555,555 \quad 10\% \times \$555,555 = \$55,555 \text{ match}$$

For additional cost sharing and match information, see Section [C. Eligibility Information](#).

Pre-Agreement Cost Approvals

OJP does not typically approve pre-agreement costs; an applicant must request and obtain the prior written approval of OJP for all such costs. If approved, pre-agreement costs could be paid

from grant funds consistent with a grantee's approved budget, and under applicable cost standards. However, all such costs prior to award and prior to approval of the costs are incurred at the sole risk of an applicant. Generally, no applicant should incur project costs *before* submitting an application requesting federal funding for those costs. Should there be extenuating circumstances that appear to be appropriate for OJP's consideration as pre-agreement costs, the applicant should contact the point of contact listed on the title page of this announcement for details on the requirements for submitting a written request for approval. See the section on Costs Requiring Prior Approval in the [Financial Guide](#), for more information.

Limitation on Use of Award Funds for Employee Compensation; Waiver

With respect to any award of more than \$250,000 made under this solicitation, recipients may not use federal funds to pay total cash compensation (salary plus cash bonuses) to any employee of the award recipient at a rate that exceeds 110% of the maximum annual salary payable to a member of the Federal Government's Senior Executive Service (SES) at an agency with a Certified SES Performance Appraisal System for that year.³ The 2015 salary table for SES employees is available at the Office of Personnel Management [website](#). A recipient may compensate an employee at a greater rate, provided the amount in excess of this compensation limitation is paid with non-federal funds. (Any such additional compensation will not be considered matching funds where match requirements apply.)

The Director of BJS may exercise discretion to waive, on an individual basis, the limitation on compensation rates allowable under an award. An applicant requesting a waiver should include a detailed justification in the budget narrative of the application. Unless the applicant submits a waiver request and justification with the application, the applicant should anticipate that OJP will request the applicant to adjust and resubmit the budget.

The justification should include the particular qualifications and expertise of the individual, the uniqueness of the service the individual will provide, the individual's specific knowledge of the program or project being undertaken with award funds, and a statement explaining that the individual's salary is commensurate with the regular and customary rate for an individual with his or her qualifications and expertise, and for the work to be done.

Prior Approval, Planning, and Reporting of Conference/Meeting/Training Costs

OJP strongly encourages applicants that propose to use award funds for any conference-, meeting-, or training-related activity to review carefully—before submitting an application—the OJP policy and guidance on conference approval, planning, and reporting available at <http://www.ojp.gov/financialguide/PostawardRequirements/chapter15page1.htm>. OJP policy and guidance (1) encourage minimization of conference, meeting, and training costs; (2) require prior written approval (which may affect project timelines) of most such costs for cooperative agreement recipients and of some such costs for grant recipients; and (3) set cost limits, including a general prohibition of all food and beverage costs.

Costs Associated with Language Assistance (if applicable)

If an applicant proposes a program or activity that would deliver services or benefits to individuals, the costs of taking reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to those services or benefits for individuals with limited English proficiency may be allowable. Reasonable steps

³ This limitation on use of award funds does not apply to the non-profit organizations specifically named at Appendix VIII to 2 C.F.R. part 200.

to provide meaningful access to services or benefits may include interpretation or translation services where appropriate.

For additional information, see the "Civil Rights Compliance" section under "Solicitation Requirements" in the [OJP Funding Resource Center](#).

C. Eligibility Information

For additional eligibility information, see Title page.

Cost Sharing or Match Requirement

For additional information on cost sharing and match requirement, see Section [B. Federal Award Information](#).

Limit on Number of Application Submissions

If an applicant submits multiple versions of the same application, BJS will review only the most recent system-validated version submitted. For more information on valid versions, see [How to Apply](#).

D. Application and Submission Information

What an Application Should Include

Applicants should anticipate that if they fail to submit an application that contains all of the specified elements, it may negatively affect the review of their application; and, should a decision be made to make an award, it may result in the inclusion of special conditions that preclude the recipient from accessing or using award funds pending satisfaction of the conditions.

Moreover, applicants should anticipate that applications determined to be nonresponsive to the scope of the solicitation, or that do not include the application elements that BJS has designated to be critical, will neither proceed to peer review nor receive further consideration. Under this solicitation, BJS has designated the following application elements as critical: Program Narrative, Budget Detail Worksheet, and Budget Narrative. Applicants may combine the Budget Narrative and the Budget Detail Worksheet into a single document. However, if an applicant submits only one budget document, it must contain **both** narrative and detail information. Review the "Note on File Names and File Types" under [How to Apply](#) to be sure applications are submitted in permitted formats.

OJP strongly recommends that applicants use appropriately descriptive file names (e.g., "Program Narrative," "Budget Detail Worksheet and Budget Narrative," "Timelines," "Memoranda of Understanding," and "Resumes") for all attachments. Also, OJP recommends that applicants include resumes in a single file.

1. Information to Complete the Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)

The SF-424 is a required standard form used as a cover sheet for submission of preapplications, applications, and related information. Grants.gov and OJP's Grants Management System (GMS) take information from the applicant's profile to populate the fields on this form. When selecting "type of applicant," if the applicant is a for-profit entity, select "For-Profit Organization" or "Small Business" (as applicable).

Intergovernmental Review: This funding opportunity is subject to [Executive Order 12372](#). Applicants may find the names and addresses of their state's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) at the following website: www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc/. Applicants whose state appears on the SPOC list must contact their state's SPOC to find out about, and comply with, the state's process under Executive Order 12372. In completing the SF-424, applicants whose state appears on the SPOC list are to make the appropriate selection in response to question 19 once the applicant has complied with their state's E.O. 12372 process. (Applicants whose state does not appear on the SPOC list are to make the appropriate selection in response to question 19 to indicate that the "Program is subject to E.O. 12372 but has not been selected by the State for review.")

2. Project Abstract

Applications should include a high-quality project abstract that summarizes the proposed project in 400 words or less. Project abstracts should be—

- written for a general public audience;
- submitted as a separate attachment with "Project Abstract" as part of its file name; and
- single-spaced, using a standard 12-point font (Times New Roman) with 1-inch margins.

3. Program Narrative

The following sections should be included as part of the program narrative:

1. Statement of the Problem
2. Project Design and Implementation
3. Capabilities and Competencies
4. Plan for Collecting the Data Required for this Solicitation's Performance Measures

Within these sections, the narrative should address the following areas:

Section 1: Statement of the Problem - Background and Identification of Needs

Accomplishments and progress on record improvement goals. Applicants must provide a summary of the major accomplishments achieved with funding under NCHIP. This section should describe, in quantifiable terms if possible, results achieved and advances made since the inception of NCHIP. Accomplishments can be grouped in blocks of years (e.g., 1995–1999; 2000–2005; 2006–present).

Specifically address accomplishments relating to participation in each of the national databases and initiatives (i.e., III, NICS, NCIC Protection Order File, mental health records, and Livescan/AFIS capability). Where relevant, reference should be made to surveys and data quality audits. This section should also include any evaluative efforts undertaken to identify the key areas of weakness in the state's criminal record system since submission of previous NCHIP applications. Tribal applicants should discuss progress related to record automation and improvement funded by other federal sources that are applicable to the above areas.

Current status in specific subject areas. Describe the status of the applicant's participation in each of the following subject areas in your application and include the current number of records in each system, where applicable.

- **Disposition available to III.** All applicants should discuss the percentage of state records with final dispositions or case outcomes linked to arrests and available at the time of a firearm background check. Applicants should provide information on efforts to improve reporting and availability at the national level. The application should also discuss the extent to which dispositions requested in connection with a NICS inquiry have not been provided within the required timeframe and must identify any problems that are delaying instant responses to NICS inquiries and identify proposed solutions to these problems.
- **NICS Index and mental health record availability.** All applications should discuss the extent to which the applicant provides information to the FBI's NICS Index. Applicants that do not submit information to this file should describe the prohibiting factors and any plans to overcome them. [Note: HIPPA is not considered to be a prohibiting factor.] Additionally, all applicants should indicate whether mental health records are checked, either by the state POC or the FBI, during a NICS check. Where mental health records are accessible, include the number of records currently available and any plans to improve availability. If mental health records are not currently accessible at the time of a background check, describe factors that limit or prohibit exchange of mental health records. States that are not currently eligible for funding under the NICS Act Record Improvement Program (NARIP) should discuss plans, if any, to establish a relief from disabilities program and progress toward NARIP eligibility. If a state has no immediate plans to pursue development of a relief program, include a statement outlining the reasons for not pursuing one.
- **Protection Order File.** All applicants should indicate whether they submit information for inclusion in the FBI's NCIC Protection Order file. Applicants that submit protection orders should indicate the number of active protection orders provided to the FBI. Applicants that do not submit all active protection orders to NCIC should describe the prohibiting factors and any plans to overcome them.
- **Warrants/wanted person records.** All applicants should indicate whether they submit information for inclusion in the FBI's NCIC Wanted Persons file. Applicants that submit such records should indicate the number provided to the FBI for the last full calendar year. Applicants that do not submit such records (or do not submit all qualifying records that are maintained at the state or local level) should describe the prohibiting factors and any plans to overcome them.

Section 2: Project Design and Implementation - Description of Tasks to be Funded Under NCHIP

- Describe the activities to be conducted with NCHIP funds over the project period and specifically address how activities relate to each of the NCHIP priority areas identified under "Priority areas for grant funding" on Page 10. Dollar amounts should be included for each funded task. Applications should also provide

quantitative measures, to assess or describe the impact each project will have on the quality, completeness, and availability of records at the national level.

- **Letter from the Courts.** In recognition of the importance of court reporting to the development of complete and accurate criminal records, all applications should describe tasks and indicate the level of funds that will be made directly available to the courts. **Where no funds are provided for court-directed disposition reporting activities, a certification by the appropriate state or tribal court official declining participation must be included with this section.**

Section 3: Capabilities and Competencies - Coordination

The administering NCHIP agency should coordinate efforts with relevant emergency management task forces and agencies to ensure that records development activities are compatible with security measures for preventing acts of terrorism.

To encourage coordination and information sharing among criminal justice systems, all OJP awards that support information technology development are subject to a special condition requiring that a description of the project be submitted to the state Information Technology POC, if one has been designated. A copy of the correspondence can be submitted as part of Additional Attachments (see page X) or sent directly to BJS prior to fund drawdown.

There is no requirement that the point of contact concur with the information technology project. The intent of this condition is to facilitate communication within the state.

Recipients of funds under this solicitation should seek to ensure that any funded activities will be coordinated with related activities supported with OJP funding including awards under OJP's Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program, Drug Court Program, or the Mentally Ill Offender Act Program. Of particular interest are awards under these programs that may involve reportable records that can be shared with state and national record systems. To the extent feasible under state law and regulations, such records should be made available to the state criminal history record repository and federal files managed by the FBI, including III, NCIC, NGI (formerly IAFIS), and the NICS Index.

Tribal applicants should provide documentation that activities proposed for funding will be coordinated with a tribal consortia, the state, or directly with the FBI.

Unexpended funds. The application should describe the specific reasons that previously awarded NCHIP funds remain unexpended (if applicable) and include the current unexpended balance.

Compatibility with other systems. The application should describe the extent to which proposed activities are compatible with NIBRS, NCIC, NICS, NGI, and other applicable statewide or regional criminal justice information sharing standards or plans, including state anti-terrorism.

Section 4: Plan for Collecting the Data Required for this Solicitation's Performance Measures

To assist the Department with fulfilling its responsibilities under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA), Public Law 103-62, and the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, Public Law 111-352, applicants that receive funding under this solicitation must provide data that measure the results of their work done under this solicitation. OJP will require any award recipient, post award, to provide the data requested in the "Data Grantee Provides" column, so that OJP can calculate values for the "Performance Measures" column. Performance measures for this solicitation are as follows:

Objective	Performance Measure(s)	Data Grantee Provides
<p>Improve criminal history record systems in the states and territories to support background checks for the purposes of identifying ineligible firearm purchases, as well as persons ineligible to hold positions involving children, the elderly, or the disabled.</p>	<p>Percentage of recent state or tribal records that are automated.</p> <p>Percentage of records accessible through the Interstate Identification Index (III).</p> <p>Percentage of applications for firearm transfers rejected primarily for the presence of a prior felony conviction.</p>	<p>Number of criminal history records, manual and automated, in the state's or tribe's criminal history file.</p> <p>Number of fully automated records (records for which the master name index and entire criminal history are automated) in the state's or tribe's criminal history database.</p> <p>Number of records available through the III system (including arrests and case outcomes).</p> <p>Number of arrests reported to the repository by mail, fax, electronic, and other means of submission; of these, the number communicated by automated interface.</p> <p>Number of court dispositions reported to the repository by mail, fax, electronic, and other means of submission.</p> <p>Number of applications for firearm transfers.</p> <p>Number of applications for firearm transfers rejected for the presence of a prior felony conviction or other ineligibility factors.</p>
<p>Ensure that the infrastructure is developed to connect each state's and tribe's records systems to national records and, in turn, to connect each state's background check databases to one another.</p>	<p>Number of states and tribes participating in the FBI's Next Generation Identification (NGI) fingerprint capture.</p> <p>Number of states and tribes participating in the FBI's Protection Order File (POF).</p>	<p>Number of 10-print records submitted to the FBI's NGI.</p> <p>Number of records submitted to the FBI's POF.</p>

BJS does not require applicants to submit performance measures data with their application. Performance measures are included as an alert that BJS will require successful applicants to submit specific data as part of their reporting requirements. For the application, applicants should indicate an understanding of these requirements and discuss how they will gather the required data, should they receive funding.

Note on Project Evaluations

Applicants that propose to use funds awarded through this solicitation to conduct project evaluations should be aware that certain project evaluations (such as systematic investigations designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge) may constitute “research” for purposes of applicable DOJ human subjects protection regulations. However, project evaluations that are intended only to generate internal improvements to a program or service, or are conducted only to meet OJP’s performance measure data reporting requirements likely do not constitute “research.” Applicants should provide sufficient information for OJP to determine whether the particular project they propose would either intentionally or unintentionally collect and/or use information in such a way that it meets the DOJ regulatory definition of research.

Research, for the purposes of human subjects protections for OJP-funded programs, is defined as, “a systematic investigation, including research development, testing, and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge” 28 C.F.R. § 46.102(d). For additional information on determining whether a proposed activity would constitute research, see the decision tree to assist applicants on the “Research and the Protection of Human Subjects” section of the [OJP Funding Resource Center](http://www.ojp.gov/funding/Explore/SolicitationRequirements/EvidenceResearchEvaluationRequirements.htm) Web page (www.ojp.gov/funding/Explore/SolicitationRequirements/EvidenceResearchEvaluationRequirements.htm). Applicants whose proposals may involve a research or statistical component also should review the “Data Privacy and Confidentiality Requirements” section on that Web page.

4. Budget Detail Worksheet and Budget Narrative

a. Budget Detail Worksheet

A sample Budget Detail Worksheet can be found at www.ojp.gov/funding/Apply/Resources/BudgetDetailWorksheet.pdf. Applicants that submit their budget in a different format should include the budget categories listed in the sample budget worksheet. (Work associated with satisfying data archiving requirements should be reflected.) BJS expects applicants to provide a thorough narrative to each section of the Budget Detail Worksheet.

For questions pertaining to budget and examples of allowable and unallowable costs, see the Financial Guide at www.ojp.gov/financialguide/index.htm.

b. Budget Narrative

The budget narrative should thoroughly and clearly describe every category of expense listed in the Budget Detail Worksheet. OJP expects proposed budgets to be complete, cost effective, and allowable (e.g., reasonable, allocable, and necessary for project activities).

Applicants should demonstrate in their budget narratives how they will maximize cost effectiveness of grant expenditures. Budget narratives should generally describe cost effectiveness in relation to potential alternatives and the goals of the project. For example, a budget narrative should detail why planned in-person meetings are

necessary, or how technology and collaboration with outside organizations could be used to reduce costs, without compromising quality.

The narrative should be mathematically sound and correspond with the information and figures provided in the Budget Detail Worksheet. The narrative should explain how the applicant estimated and calculated all costs, and how they are relevant to the completion of the proposed project. The narrative may include tables for clarification purposes but need not be in a spreadsheet format. As with the Budget Detail Worksheet, the Budget Narrative should be broken down by year.

c. Non-Competitive Procurement Contracts In Excess of Simplified Acquisition Threshold

If an applicant proposes to make one or more non-competitive procurements of products or services, where the non-competitive procurement will exceed the simplified acquisition threshold (also known as the small purchase threshold), which is currently set at \$150,000, the application should address the considerations outlined in the [Financial Guide](#).

d. Pre-Agreement Cost Approvals

For information on pre-agreement costs, see Section [B. Federal Award Information](#).

5. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)

Indirect costs are allowed only if the applicant has a current federally approved indirect cost rate. (This requirement does not apply to units of local government.) Attach a copy of the federally approved indirect cost rate agreement to the application. Applicants that do not have an approved rate may request one through their cognizant federal agency, which will review all documentation and approve a rate for the applicant organization, or, if the applicant's accounting system permits, costs may be allocated in the direct cost categories. For the definition of Cognizant Federal Agency, see the "Glossary of Terms" in the [Financial Guide](#). For assistance with identifying your cognizant agency, please contact the Customer Service Center at 1-800-458-0786 or at ask.ocfo@usdoj.gov. If DOJ is the cognizant federal agency, applicants may obtain information needed to submit an indirect cost rate proposal at <http://www.ojp.gov/funding/Apply/Resources/IndirectCosts.pdf>.

6. Tribal Authorizing Resolution (if applicable)

Tribes, tribal organizations, or third parties proposing to provide direct services or assistance to residents on tribal lands should include in their applications a resolution, a letter, affidavit, or other documentation, as appropriate, that certifies that the applicant has the legal authority from the tribe(s) to implement the proposed project on tribal lands. In those instances when an organization or consortium of tribes applies for a grant on behalf of a tribe or multiple specific tribes, the application should include appropriate legal documentation, as described above, from all tribes that would receive services or assistance under the grant. A consortium of tribes for which existing consortium bylaws allow action without support from all tribes in the consortium (i.e., without an authorizing resolution or comparable legal documentation from each tribal governing body) may submit, instead, a copy of its consortium bylaws with the application.

Applicants unable to submit an application that includes a fully-executed (i.e., signed) copy of appropriate legal documentation, as described above, consistent with the applicable tribe's governance structure, should, at a minimum, submit an unsigned, draft version of

such legal documentation as part of its application (except for cases in which, with respect to a tribal consortium applicant, consortium bylaws allow action without the support of all consortium member tribes). If selected for funding, BJS will make use of and access to funds contingent on receipt of the fully-executed legal documentation.

7. Applicant Disclosure of High Risk Status

Applicants are to disclose whether they are currently designated high risk by another federal grant making agency. This includes any status requiring additional oversight by the federal agency due to past programmatic or financial concerns. If an applicant is designated high risk by another federal grant making agency, you must email the following information to OJPComplianceReporting@usdoj.gov at the time of application submission:

- The federal agency that currently designated the applicant as high risk
- Date the applicant was designated high risk
- The high risk point of contact name, phone number, and email address, from that federal agency
- Reasons for the high risk status

OJP seeks this information to ensure appropriate federal oversight of any grant award. Unlike the Excluded Parties List, this high risk information does not disqualify any organization from receiving an OJP award. However, additional grant oversight may be included, if necessary, in award documentation.

8. Additional Attachments

The following **required** documents should be submitted either as a single file attachment or as separate attachments:

- a. letter of support or commitment from the courts (required if no funds are going to the courts for disposition-related or mental health record capture projects);
- b. letter to the state Information Technology POC describing the current application request, as referenced above;
- c. a complete project timeline outlining each activity, completion time, and responsible party; and
- d. **Applicant Disclosure of Pending Applications.**
Applicants are to disclose whether they have pending applications for federally funded grants or subgrants (including cooperative agreements) that include requests for funding to support the same project being proposed under this solicitation and will cover the identical cost items outlined in the budget narrative and worksheet in the application under this solicitation. The disclosure should include both direct applications for federal funding (e.g., applications to federal agencies) and indirect applications for such funding (e.g., applications to state agencies that will subaward federal funds).

OJP seeks this information to help avoid any inappropriate duplication of funding. Leveraging multiple funding sources in a complementary manner to implement comprehensive programs or projects is encouraged and is not seen as inappropriate duplication.

Applicants that have pending applications as described above are to provide the following information about pending applications submitted within the last 12 months:

- the Federal or State funding agency;
- the solicitation name/project name; and
- the point of contact information at the applicable funding agency.

Federal or State Funding Agency	Solicitation Name/Project Name	Name/Phone/E-mail for Point of Contact at Funding Agency
DOJ/COPS	COPS Hiring Program	Jane Doe, 202/000-0000; jane.doe@usdoj.gov
HHS/ Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration	Drug Free Communities Mentoring Program/ North County Youth Mentoring Program	John Doe, 202/000-0000; john.doe@hhs.gov

Applicants should include the table as a separate attachment, with the file name “Disclosure of Pending Applications,” to their application. Applicants that do not have pending applications as described above are to include a statement to this effect in the separate attachment page (e.g., “[Applicant Name on SF-424] does not have pending applications submitted within the last 12 months for federally funded grants or subgrants (including cooperative agreements) that include requests for funding to support the same project being proposed under this solicitation and will cover the identical cost items outlined in the budget narrative and worksheet in the application under this solicitation.”).

9. Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire

In accordance with [2 CFR 200.205](#), Federal agencies must have in place a framework for evaluating the risks posed by applicants before they receive a Federal award. To facilitate part of this risk evaluation, **all** applicants (other than an individual) are to download, complete, and submit this [form](#).

10. Disclosure of Lobbying Activities

All applicants must complete this information. Applicants that expend any funds for lobbying activities are to provide the detailed information requested on the form Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL). Applicants that do not expend any funds for lobbying activities are to enter “N/A” in the text boxes for item 10 (“a. Name and Address of Lobbying Registrant” and “b. Individuals Performing Services”).

How to Apply

Applicants must register in, and submit applications through Grants.gov, a “one-stop storefront” to find federal funding opportunities and apply for funding. Find complete instructions on how to register and submit an application at www.Grants.gov. Applicants that experience technical difficulties during this process should call the Grants.gov Customer Support Hotline at **800-518-4726** or **606-545-5035**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, except federal holidays. Registering with

Grants.gov is a one-time process; however, **processing delays may occur, and it can take several weeks** for first-time registrants to receive confirmation and a user password. OJP encourages applicants to **register several weeks before** the application submission deadline. In addition, OJP urges applicants to submit applications 72 hours prior to the application due date to allow time to receive validation messages or rejection notifications from Grants.gov, and to correct in a timely fashion any problems that may have caused a rejection notification.

BJS strongly encourages all prospective applicants to sign up for Grants.gov email notifications regarding this solicitation. If this solicitation is cancelled or modified, individuals who sign up with Grants.gov for updates will be automatically notified.

Note on File Names and File Types: Grants.gov only permits the use of certain specific characters in names of attachment files. Valid file names may include only the characters shown in the table below. Grants.gov is designed to reject any application that includes an attachment(s) with a file name that contains any characters not shown in the table below.

Characters	Special Characters		
Upper case (A – Z)	Parenthesis ()	Curly braces { }	Square brackets []
Lower case (a – z)	Ampersand (&)	Tilde (~)	Exclamation point (!)
Underscore (_)	Comma (,)	Semicolon (;)	Apostrophe (')
Hyphen (-)	At sign (@)	Number sign (#)	Dollar sign (\$)
Space	Percent sign (%)	Plus sign (+)	Equal sign (=)
Period (.)	When using the ampersand (&) in XML, applicants must use the “&amp;” format.		

Grants.gov is designed to forward successfully submitted applications to OJP’s Grants Management System (GMS).

GMS does not accept executable file types as application attachments. These disallowed file types include, but are not limited to, the following extensions: “.com,” “.bat,” “.exe,” “.vbs,” “.cfg,” “.dat,” “.db,” “.dbf,” “.dll,” “.ini,” “.log,” “.ora,” “.sys,” and “.zip.” GMS may reject applications with files that use these extensions. It is important to allow time to change the type of file(s) if the application is rejected.

All applicants are required to complete the following steps:

OJP may not make a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable DUNS and SAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the federal awarding agency is ready to make a federal award, the federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a federal award to another applicant.

- 1. Acquire a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number.** In general, the Office of Management and Budget requires that all applicants (other than individuals) for federal funds include a DUNS number in their applications for a new award or a supplement to an existing award. A DUNS number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and differentiating entities receiving federal funds. The identifier is used for tracking purposes and to validate address and point of contact information for federal assistance applicants, recipients, and subrecipients. The DUNS number will be used throughout the grant life cycle. Obtaining a DUNS number is a free,

one-time activity. Call Dun and Bradstreet at 866-705-5711 to obtain a DUNS number or apply online at www.dnb.com. A DUNS number is usually received within 1 to 2 business days.

- 2. Acquire registration with the System for Award Management (SAM).** SAM is the repository for standard information about federal financial assistance applicants, recipients, and subrecipients. OJP requires all applicants (other than individuals) for federal financial assistance to maintain current registrations in the SAM database. Applicants must be registered in SAM to successfully register in Grants.gov. Applicants must **update or renew their SAM registration annually** to maintain an active status.

Applications cannot be successfully submitted in Grants.gov until Grants.gov receives the SAM registration information. **The information transfer from SAM to Grants.gov can take up to 48 hours.** OJP recommends that the applicant register or renew registration with SAM as early as possible.

Information about SAM registration procedures can be accessed at www.sam.gov.

- 3. Acquire an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) and a Grants.gov username and password.** Complete the AOR profile on Grants.gov and create a username and password. The applicant organization's DUNS number must be used to complete this step. For more information about the registration process, go to www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp.
- 4. Acquire confirmation for the AOR from the E-Business Point of Contact (E-Biz POC).** The E-Biz POC at the applicant organization must log into Grants.gov to confirm the applicant organization's AOR. Note that an organization can have more than one AOR.
- 5. Search for the funding opportunity on Grants.gov.** Use the following identifying information when searching for the funding opportunity on Grants.gov. The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number for this solicitation is 16.554, titled "National Criminal History Improvement Program," and the funding opportunity number is BJS-2015-4085.
- 6. Submit a valid application consistent with this solicitation by following the directions in Grants.gov.** Within 24–48 hours after submitting the electronic application, the applicant should receive two notification from Grants.gov. The first will confirm the receipt of the application and the second first will confirm the receipt of the application and the second will state whether the application has been successfully validated, or rejected due to errors, with an explanation. It is possible to first receive a message indicating that the application is received and then receive a rejection notice a few minutes or hours later. Submitting well ahead of the deadline provides time to correct the problem(s) that caused the rejection. **Important:** OJP urges applicants to submit applications **at least 72 hours prior** to the application due date to allow time to receive validation messages or rejection notifications from Grants.gov, and to correct in a timely fashion any problems that may have caused a rejection notification.

Click [here](#) for further details on DUNS, SAM, and Grants.gov registration steps and timeframes.

Note: Duplicate Applications

If an applicant submits multiple versions of the same the same application, BJS will review only the most recent system-validatedsystem-validated version submitted. See Note on File Names and File Types under [How to Apply](#).

Experiencing Unforeseen Grants.gov Technical Issues

Applicants that experience unforeseen Grants.gov technical issues beyond their control that prevent them from submitting their application by the deadline must contact the Grants.gov [Customer Support Hotline](#) or the [SAM Help Desk](#) to report the technical issue and receive a tracking number. Then applicant must e-mail the BJS contact identified in the Contact Information section on page 2 **within 24 hours after the application deadline** and request approval to submit their application. The e-mail must describe the technical difficulties, and include a timeline of the applicant's submission efforts, the complete grant application, the applicant's DUNS number, and any Grants.gov Help Desk or SAM tracking number(s). **Note: BJS does not automatically approve requests.** After the program office reviews the submission, and contacts the Grants.gov or SAM Help Desks to validate the reported technical issues, OJP will inform the applicant whether the request to submit a late application has been approved or denied. If OJP determines that the applicant failed to follow all required procedures, which resulted in an untimely application submission, OJP will deny the applicant's request to submit their application.

The following conditions are generally insufficient to justify late submissions:

- failure to register in SAM or Grants.gov in sufficient time;
- failure to follow Grants.gov instructions on how to register and apply as posted on its Web site
- failure to follow each instruction in the OJP solicitation; and
- technical issues with the applicant's computer or information technology environment, including firewalls.

Notifications regarding known technical problems with Grants.gov, if any, are posted at the top of the OJP funding Web page at www.ojp.gov/funding/Explore/CurrentFundingOpportunities.htm.

E. Application Review Information

Selection Criteria

All applications must be responsive to this solicitation. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the evaluation criteria BJS will use to make funding decisions before deciding whether to submit an application for this solicitation. Applicants should understand that applications should respond to priorities identified and that full funding may not be possible for all proposed activities. **For FY 2015 NCHIP grants, completeness of the application in terms of all required information will be a key consideration for BJS.** Applications that meet basic minimum requirements will be evaluated by peer reviewers using the following review criteria.

1. Statement of the Problem, as Described in the Program Narrative (30%)

- the extent to which the application proposes to directly address one or more of the priorities as identified in the solicitation; and
- the extent to which the application addresses the scope of the need and identifies quantifiable measures to demonstrate how the funds will improve the quality,

completeness, and accessibility of records at the national level, particularly with regard to the NICS.

2. Project/Program Design and Implementation (20%)

- the extent to which proposed activities will result in more records being available to systems queried by the NICS, including through federal and state and criminal history records, NCIC, and the NICS Index;
- the extent to which the application recognizes the role of the courts in ensuring complete records;
- the extent to which the proposal appears reasonable in light of the applicant's current level of system development and statutory framework; and
- the extent to which the application demonstrates the technical feasibility of the proposed task(s) and details the specific implementation plan to achieve the intended deliverables.

3. Capabilities and Competencies (25%)

- evidence of applicant's progress in record quality improvement efforts as demonstrated by making relevant records available for national background checks and the reported number of records currently available in the national files;
- the extent to which the applicant has fulfilled goals of previous NCHIP awards (or related criminal record improvement awards), including consideration of the total funds already awarded and expended funds from previous awards;
- the applicant's commitment to helping BJS assess criminal history information systems and operations as demonstrated by participation in BJS sponsored evaluation activities, surveys, and data quality studies; and
- the applicant's commitment to the national record system as evidence by membership in III and participation in the FBI's NFF, and the current status of development in its criminal records.

4. Plan for Collecting the Data Required for this Solicitation's Performance Measures (5%)

- expressed commitment of the applicant to supply key performance measures for the award period. Performance measures include—
 - number of criminal history records, manual and automated, in the state's or tribe's criminal history file;
 - number of fully automated records (records for which the master name index and entire criminal history are automated) in the state's or tribe's criminal history database;
 - number of records available through the (III) (including arrests and case outcomes);
 - number of arrests reported to the repository by mail, fax, electronic, and other means of submission; of these, the number communicated by automated interface;
 - number of court dispositions reported to the repository by mail, fax, electronic, and other means of submission;
 - number of applications for firearm transfers (if applicable);

- number of applications for firearm transfers rejected for the presence of a prior felony conviction or other ineligibility factors (if applicable);
 - number of records submitted to the FBI's NGI (formerly IAFIS); and
 - number of records submitted to the FBI's POF.
- the sufficiency of the plan presented for collecting and reporting these performance measures.

5. Budget: Complete, Reasonable, and Allowable; Cost Effective; and Necessary for Project Activities (10%)

*Budget narratives should generally demonstrate how applicants will maximize cost effectiveness of grant expenditures. Budget narratives should demonstrate cost effectiveness in relation to potential alternatives and the goals of the project.*⁴

- the reasonableness of the budget, including the basis of the estimates, nature of the proposed expenditures, and their relation to the priorities identified herein;
- the extent to which the applicant proposes to match or leverage the NCHIP award with other resources; and
- the extent to which the applicant proposes to leverage funds to directly support activities associated with the proposed tasks.

6. Impact/Outcomes and Evaluation (10%)

- the extent to which the application identifies the anticipated outcomes of the proposed project(s) in quantifiable terms to demonstrate the anticipated level of impact at the national level.

Review Process

OJP is committed to ensuring a fair and open process for awarding grants. BJS reviews the application to make sure that the information presented is reasonable, understandable, measurable, and achievable, as well as consistent with the solicitation.

Peer reviewers will review the applications submitted under this solicitation that meet basic minimum requirements. For purposes of assessing whether applicants have met basic minimum requirements, OJP screens applications for compliance with specified program requirements to help determine which applications should proceed to further consideration for award. Although program requirements may vary, the following are common requirements applicable to all solicitations for funding under OJP grant programs:

- Applications must be submitted by an eligible type of applicant
- Applications must request funding within programmatic funding constraints (if applicable)
- Applications must be responsive to the scope of the solicitation
- Applications must include all items designated as “critical elements”

⁴ Generally speaking, a reasonable cost is a cost that, in its nature or amount, does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur the costs.

- Applicants will be checked against the General Services Administration’s Excluded Parties List

For a list of critical elements, see “What an Application Should Include” under [Section D. Application and Submission Information](#).

BJS may use internal peer reviewers, external peer reviewers, or a combination, to assess applications meeting basic minimum requirements on technical merit using the solicitation’s selection criteria. An external peer reviewer is an expert in the subject matter of a given solicitation who is not a current DOJ employee. An internal reviewer is a current DOJ employee who is well-versed or has expertise in the subject matter of this solicitation. A peer review panel will evaluate, score, and rate applications that meet basic minimum requirements. Peer reviewers’ ratings and any resulting recommendations are advisory only, although their views are considered carefully. In addition to peer review ratings, considerations for award recommendations and decisions may include, but are not limited to, underserved populations, geographic diversity, strategic priorities, past performance under prior BJS and OJP awards, and available funding.

OJP reviews applications for potential discretionary awards to evaluate the risks posed by applicants before they receive an award. This review may include but is not limited to the following:

1. Financial stability and fiscal integrity
2. Quality of management systems and ability to meet the management standards prescribed in the Financial Guide
3. History of performance
4. Reports and findings from audits
5. The applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities
6. Proposed costs to determine if the Budget Detail Worksheet and Budget Narrative accurately explain project costs, and whether those costs are reasonable, necessary, and allowable under applicable federal cost principles and agency regulations

Absent explicit statutory authorization or written delegation of authority to the contrary, all final award decisions will be made by the Assistant Attorney General, who may consider factors including, but not limited to, peer review ratings, underserved populations, geographic diversity, strategic priorities, past performance under prior BJS and OJP awards, and available funding when making awards.

F. Federal Award Administration Information

Federal Award Notices

OJP award notification will be sent from GMS. Recipients will be required to login; accept any outstanding assurances and certifications on the award; designate a financial point of contact; and review, sign, and accept the award. The award acceptance process involves physical signature of the award document by the authorized representative and the scanning of the fully-executed award document to OJP.

Administrative, National Policy, and other Legal Requirements

If selected for funding, in addition to implementing the funded project consistent with the agency-approved project proposal and budget, the recipient must comply with award terms and conditions, and other legal requirements, including but not limited to OMB, DOJ or other federal regulations which will be included in the award, incorporated into the award by reference, or are otherwise applicable to the award. OJP strongly encourages prospective applicants to review the information pertaining to these requirements **prior** to submitting an application. To assist applicants and recipients in accessing and reviewing this information, OJP has placed pertinent information on its [Solicitation Requirements](#) page of the [OJP Funding Resource Center](#).

Please note in particular the following two forms, which applicants must accept in GMS prior to the receipt of any award funds, as each details legal requirements with which applicants must provide specific assurances and certifications of compliance. Applicants may view these forms in the [OJP Funding Resource Center](#) and are strongly encouraged to review and consider them carefully prior to making an application for OJP grant funds.

- [Certifications Regarding Lobbying; Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters; and Drug-Free Workplace Requirements](#)
- [Standard Assurances](#)

Upon grant approval, OJP electronically transmits (via GMS) the award document to the prospective award recipient. In addition to other award information, the award document contains award terms and conditions that specify national policy requirements⁵ with which recipients of federal funding must comply; uniform administrative requirements, cost principles, and audit requirements; and program-specific terms and conditions required based on applicable program (statutory) authority or requirements set forth in OJP solicitations and program announcements, and other requirements which may be attached to appropriated funding. For example, certain efforts may call for special requirements, terms, or conditions relating to intellectual property, data/information-sharing or -access, or information security; or audit requirements, expenditures and milestones, or publications and/or press releases. OJP also may place additional terms and conditions on an award based on its risk assessment of the applicant, or for other reasons it determines necessary to fulfill the goals and objectives of the program.

Prospective applicants may access and review the text of mandatory conditions OJP includes in all OJP awards, as well as the text of certain other conditions, such as administrative conditions, via [Mandatory Award Terms and Conditions](#) page of the [OJP Funding Resource Center](#).

As stated above, BJS anticipates that it will make any award from this solicitation in the form of a cooperative agreement. Cooperative agreement awards include standard “federal involvement” conditions that describe the general allocation of responsibility for execution of the funded program. Generally-stated, under cooperative agreement awards, responsibility for the day-to-day conduct of the funded project rests with the recipient in implementing the funded and approved proposal and budget, and the award terms and conditions. Responsibility for oversight and redirection of the project, if necessary, rests with BJS.

⁵ See generally 2 C.F.R. 200.300 (provides a general description of national policy requirements typically applicable to recipients of Federal awards, including the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (FFATA)).

In addition to any “federal involvement” condition(s), OJP cooperative agreement awards include a special condition specifying certain reporting requirements required in connection with conferences, meetings, retreats, seminars, symposium, training activities, or similar events funded under the award, consistent with OJP policy and guidance on conference approval, planning, and reporting.

Cooperative Agreement Under NCHIP and NARIP

This NCHIP/NARIP related project is to be funded as a cooperative agreement. The basis for using a cooperative agreement is the substantial involvement of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) in providing information, guidance, and direction relative to criminal history records improvements within the states. BJS will exercise general approval over the entire project. In addition, the substantial involvement of BJS will include, but not be limited to—

- a. Determining the types of criminal history record information that will be useful to federal, state, and local agencies;
- b. Identifying Federal information reporting standards and guidelines and making them available to the recipient or providing access to them;
- c. Providing technical assistance to the recipient to enhance state criminal history records, identify convicted felons, and improve the quality and timeliness of criminal history information;
- d. Informing the recipient of the status of Federal program requirements, specifications, and funding levels; and
- e. Requesting and obtaining statistical data as needed to monitor and assess performance with respect to criminal records improvement goals.

Comprehensive Strategy for Information Sharing

Recipient is or will be following a comprehensive strategy for information sharing systems to improve the functioning of the criminal justice system, with an emphasis on integration of all criminal justice components, law enforcement, courts, prosecution, corrections, and probation and parole. Further, the strategy must be developed in consultation with State and local officials with emphasis on the recommendation of officials whose duty it is to oversee, plan, and implement integrated information technology systems, and contain (a) a definition and analysis of integration in the States and localities developing integrated information sharing systems; (b) an assessment of the criminal justice resources being devoted to information technology; (c) State and local resource needs; (d) Federal, State, regional, and local information technology coordination requirements; and (e) statewide priorities for planning and implementation of information technology systems.

FBI Systems Compatibility

Recipient agrees that criminal justice information systems designed, implemented, or upgraded with NCHIP or NARIP funds will be compatible, where applicable, with the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), National Crime Information Center system (NCIC 2000), the National Criminal Instant Background Check System (NICS), the Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS), and applicable national, statewide, or regional criminal justice information sharing standards and plans.

AFIS Compatibility

Recipient agrees that Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) equipment purchased under this award will conform to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Standard,

"Data Format for the Interchange of Fingerprint, Facial & Other Biometric Information" (ANSI/NIST-ITL 1-2007 PART 1) and other reporting standards of the FBI.

State and Local Coordination

Recipient agrees that activities funded under this award will be closely coordinated with related activities supported with OJP, state, local, or tribal funds.

Coordination Involving Federal Employment Check and Firearm-Related Background Checks

Recipient agrees that activities supported under this award will be coordinated with federal, state, and local activities relating to sharing criminal history record information to investigative services providers pursuant to Title 5 U.S.C. Sec. 9101 and related to presale firearm checks, as appropriate.

General Information about Post-Federal Award Reporting Requirements

Recipients must submit quarterly financial reports, semi-annual progress reports, final financial and progress reports, and, if applicable, an annual audit report in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200. Future awards and fund drawdowns may be withheld if reports are delinquent.

Special Reporting requirements may be required by OJP, depending on the statutory, legislative, or administrative obligations of the recipient or the program.

G. Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s)

For additional Federal Awarding Agency Contact(s), see the Title page.

For additional contact information for Grants.gov, see the Title page.

H. Other Information

Provide Feedback to OJP

To assist OJP in improving its application and award processes, we encourage applicants to provide feedback on this solicitation, the application submission process, and/or the application review/peer review process. Provide feedback to OJPSolicitationFeedback@usdoj.gov.

IMPORTANT: This e-mail is for feedback and suggestions only. Replies are **not** sent from this mailbox. If you have specific questions on any program or technical aspect of the solicitation, **you must** directly contact the appropriate number or e-mail listed on the front of this solicitation document. These contacts are provided to help ensure that you can directly reach an individual who can address your specific questions in a timely manner.

If you are interested in being a reviewer for other OJP grant applications, please e-mail your resume to ojppeerreview@lmbps.com. The OJP Solicitation Feedback e-mail account will not forward your resume. **Note:** Neither you nor anyone else from your organization can be a peer reviewer in a competition in which you or your organization have submitted an application.

Application Checklist

FY 2015 National Criminal History Improvement Program (NCHIP)

This application checklist has been created to assist in developing an application.

What an Applicant Should Do:

Prior to Registering in Grants.gov:

_____ Acquire a DUNS Number (see page 25)

_____ Acquire or renew registration with SAM (see page 26)

To Register with Grants.gov:

_____ Acquire AOR and Grants.gov username/password (see page 26)

_____ Acquire AOR confirmation from the E-Biz POC (see page 26)

To Find Funding Opportunity:

_____ Search for the Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov (see page 26)

_____ Download Funding Opportunity and Application Package (see page 26)

_____ Sign up for Grants.gov email notifications (optional) (see page 25)

_____ Read [Important Notice: Applying for Grants in Grants.gov](#)

After application submission, receive Grants.gov email notifications that:

_____ (1) application has been received,

_____ (2) application has either been successfully validated or rejected with errors
(see page 25)

If no Grants.gov receipt, and validation or error notifications are received:

_____ contact BJS regarding experiencing technical difficulties
(see page 27)

General Requirements:

_____ Review the [Solicitation Requirements](#) in the OJP Funding Resource Center.

Eligibility Requirement:

_____ Agency Designated by the Governor to Administer NCHIP or Federally recognized Indian tribal government

What an Application Should Include:

_____ Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) (see page 16)

_____ Project Abstract (see page 17)

_____ Program Narrative (see page 17)

_____ Budget Detail Worksheet (see page 21)

_____ Budget Narrative (see page 21)

_____ Employee Compensation Waiver request and justification (if applicable)
(see page 15)

_____ Read OJP policy and guidance on conference approval, planning, and reporting available at [ojp.gov/financialguide/PostawardRequirements/chapter15page1.htm](#)
(see page 15)

_____ Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL) (see page 24)

_____ Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable) (see page 22)

- _____ Tribal Authorizing Resolution (if applicable) (see page 22)
- _____ Applicant Disclosure of High Risk Status (see page 23)
- _____ Additional Attachments (see page 23)
 - _____ Letter of support or commitment from the court
 - _____ Letter to state IT POC
 - _____ Project period timeline
 - _____ Applicant Disclosure of Pending Applications (see page 23)
- _____ Financial Management and System of Internal Controls Questionnaire (if applicable)
(see page 24)