



Department of Justice

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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AWARDS MORE THAN \$119 MILLION TO BOOST FORENSIC SCIENCES

WASHINGTON – The Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs today announced awards of more than \$119 million to fund crime laboratories and advance forensic science. The grants, awarded by OJP’s National Institute of Justice, will expand crime lab capacity, improve analysis of DNA evidence and aid law enforcement officials in identifying missing persons.

“Court decisions and case outcomes rely increasingly on the application of solid science to criminal investigations,” said Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. “These awards will put state-of-the-art tools into the hands of our nation’s law enforcement professionals and forensic analysts so they can do the critical work necessary to solve crimes, identify perpetrators and achieve justice for victims.”

Forensic science plays a vital role in the criminal justice system by helping investigators reach scientifically based conclusions from physical evidence found at crime scenes. NIJ-funded research has led to new scientific discoveries in forensic anthropology and toxicology, DNA and trace evidence, and the field of death investigation. Funding also has helped crime labs process greater numbers of forensic DNA samples. Under the leadership of Director David B. Muhlhausen, NIJ is making substantial investments in the forensics field in an effort to bolster the crime-fighting capabilities of our nation’s criminal justice professionals.

Through the *DNA Capacity Enhancement and Backlog Reduction*, NIJ is awarding \$61 million to state and local jurisdictions to process, record, screen and analyze DNA evidence and to enhance the ability of crime labs to process that evidence. The program addresses evidence from many types of crimes, such as sexual assaults, property crimes, missing persons, cold cases and homicide. A list of awards is available at <https://nij.gov/funding/awards/pages/awards-list.aspx?solicitationid=4944>.

An allied NIJ program, *Forensic DNA Laboratory Efficiency Improvement and Capacity Enhancement Program*, is awarding \$6.6 million to 20 crime laboratories to help them reduce the number of items awaiting forensic analysis. The funding supports efforts to streamline processes, hire and train more personnel, and purchase technology and supplies. A list of awards is available at <https://nij.gov/funding/awards/pages/awards-list.aspx?solicitationid=4943-5049-5050-5051-5052>.

Complementing these efforts, the *Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program* is awarding a total of \$10.6 million through the program's formula (\$9.2 million) and competitive (\$1.4 million) solicitations. The awards help states and units of local government improve the quality and timeliness of forensic services provided by crime laboratories and medical examiner and coroners' offices. Funding will go toward eliminating backlogs and employing and training laboratory personnel and death investigators, among other activities. A list of awards is available at <https://nij.gov/funding/awards/pages/awards-list.aspx?fiscalyear=2017&tags=NFSIA>.

The *Post Conviction Testing of DNA Evidence Program* defrays costs incurred by states, units of local government, and public institutions of higher education for DNA testing and expenses associated with post-conviction case reviews. This year the program is providing \$3.3 million to six recipients. A list of awards is available at <https://nij.gov/funding/awards/pages/awards-list.aspx?solicitationid=4794>.

Through *Using DNA Technology to Identify the Missing Program*, NIJ is providing \$7.5 million to the University of North Texas Health Science Center to manage the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, or NamUs, a national centralized repository and resource center for missing persons and unidentified decedents. Medical examiners, coroners, law enforcement officials and the general public have free online access to NamUs.gov.

A new program, *Strengthening the Medical Examiner-Coroner System Program*, bolsters the medical examiner-coroner system through \$2.3 million in research and development funding awarded to 14 state and local agencies that conduct forensic death investigations. A list of awards is available at <https://nij.gov/funding/awards/pages/awards-list.aspx?solicitationid=4936-5045-5046>.

To assist with these projects, RTI International is receiving \$3.3 million to establish and continue to operate a *Forensic Technology Center of Excellence*. The center provides testing, evaluation and other services pertaining to technologies intended for use by criminal justice agencies.

In addition to the grants in applied and basic sciences, NIJ also supports social science studies that examine the impact and benefits of these investments in the criminal justice system. NIJ's *Research and Development in Forensic Science for Criminal Justice Purposes* program is awarding \$24.6 million to 50 recipients whose studies will lead to objective, evidence-based knowledge and tools to improve equipment, methods and systems in the forensic sciences. A list of awards is available at <https://nij.gov/funding/awards/pages/awards-list.aspx?solicitationid=4795>.

The Office of Justice Programs, headed by Acting Assistant Attorney General Alan R. Hanson, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice and assist victims. OJP has six bureaus and offices: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of

Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering and Tracking (SMART). More information about OJP and its components can be found at www.ojp.gov.

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