



NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

FISCAL YEAR 2017 REPORT ON THE
**PAUL COVERDELL FORENSIC SCIENCE
IMPROVEMENT GRANTS PROGRAM**

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Section 2806(b) of Public L. 90-351, the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, as amended, mandates the submission of a report to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate concerning grants made under the Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program in each fiscal year. This letter and the attached abstracts respond to that requirement.

The Paul Coverdell National Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program, managed by the Office of Justice Programs' National Institute of Justice (NIJ), provides funding to states and units of local government to improve the quality and timeliness of forensic-science and medical examiner-services, in accordance with the Coverdell Act. For the purposes of the Act, the District of Columbia and the five U.S. Territories are considered states. NIJ executes the Coverdell Grants Program through a grant solicitation that has both a formula and a competitive component. Only states are eligible to apply for the formula component.

The Coverdell Act requires that 85 percent of the total program funds be awarded to states through State Administering Agencies (SAAs). These "base" awards are based on the state's population and made to all eligible SAAs that apply. The Coverdell Act requires that the remaining 15 percent of program funds be awarded competitively. These "competitive" funds may be awarded to SAAs or dispersed directly to units of local government based on the merits of the respective applications. States and local governments that provide forensic-science or medical- examiner services may apply for the competitive funding.

Applications for competitive funding are reviewed by an independent panel made up of subject-matter experts from the forensic science community. The panelists review and rate the applications individually based on specific evaluation criteria specified in the solicitation.

On January 10, 2017, NIJ released the solicitation seeking applications for funding under the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program. NIJ received 180 applications; 61 applications were received for base funding and 119 applications were received competitive funding. Of the 'base' funding, (9) base applications were received from ineligible entities and removed from further consideration. Of the competitive funding, 86 applications were from local agencies and 33 from States. The remaining 119 applications were received from units of local government (86) and States (33) for competitive funding. Twenty-five competitive applications were denied due to various circumstances such as duplicate applications (2) or failure to meet basic minimum requirements (23).

NIJ made 62 awards totaling \$10,606,081; 52 states received base awards, 1 state received a combination of base and competitive awards, and 9 units of local government received competitive awards. Abstracts about each project as written by the awardees are available at <https://nij.gov/funding/awards/pages/awards-list.aspx?fiscalyear=2017&tags=NFSIA>.

Since its inception, the Coverdell Program has resulted in 1282 grants to states and units of local government. In its administration of the Coverdell Program, NIJ monitors each award to ensure compliance with federal statutes, regulations, and policies to ensure that federal funds are used appropriately. This monitoring includes diligent review of Coverdell grantees' budgets to ensure

they are in accord with the work promised in the grant application and consistent with Coverdell Program statutory and policy requirements.

NIJ is grateful for the opportunity to help improve the quality and timeliness of forensic-science and medical-examiner services throughout the nation's communities. We look forward to continuing these efforts through important programs such as the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program.