

Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)
Second Chance Act Adult Offender Comprehensive
Statewide Recidivism Reduction Demonstration Program
FY 2012 Competitive Grant Announcement
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

General

1. What are the purposes and expectations for this program?

The Second Chance Act aims to assist people with successfully returning to their communities from prisons, jails and juvenile residential facilities. The purpose of Section 101 of the Second Chance Act is to support the development and implementation of comprehensive and collaborative strategies that address the challenges posed by prisoner reentry and recidivism reduction. The purpose of this grant program is to support, at the state level, effective strategies for reducing recidivism and enhancing public safety which incorporate the following principles: (1) focus on the people most likely to commit more crimes; (2) use evidenced-based programs proven to work and ensure the delivery of services is high quality; (3) deploy supervision policies and practices that balance sanctions and treatment; and (4) target places where crime and recidivism rates are the highest.

Proposals under this solicitation should be systemic in nature and reflect a phased approach in the planning, capacity building, and specific programmatic interventions comprising a comprehensive strategy to achieve a reduction in a historical baseline recidivism rate. During the first phase, grantees will be expected to develop a reentry strategic plan which incorporates all key stakeholders required to achieve the targeted reduction in recidivism. During the second phase, grantees will be expected to provide offenders with appropriate evidence-based services based on a reentry plan that is tailored to reflect each offender's risk level and criminogenic needs, as identified through a risk/need assessment.

2. Are there additional resources that provide background information on the purposes of this solicitation?

Yes - In December 2011, the Council of State Governments Justice Center, with the support from BJA, the Pew Center on the States, and the Public Welfare Foundation, convened a State Leaders' National Forum on Reentry and Recidivism in Washington, DC. The forum was attended by teams (corrections directors, statewide reentry coordinators, and reentry champions) for each of the 50 states, DC, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

[A comprehensive web page of the event](#) was developed and includes videos, presentations, and other information about the event. At the Forum, departments of corrections from states and territories were asked to develop comprehensive statewide plans to reduce recidivism in collaboration with other criminal justice stakeholders.

3. What are the eligibility requirements under this program?

Applicants are limited to State Departments of Corrections. U.S. Territories are eligible as "States", but applications from US Territories must be submitted from the Department of Corrections in order to adhere to the eligibility requirements.

4. What is the deadline for submitting an application?

The deadline to apply for funding under this announcement is 8:00 p.m. eastern time on May 21, 2012. See the "How to Apply" section starting on page 15 of the solicitation for more details.

5. When will applicants be notified if they are successful?

Awards will be announced prior to the end of the fiscal year on September 30, 2012.

- 6. How quickly after receiving notice will a grant recipient be expected to launch their program?**
Access to funds is dependent on final budget clearance. Award recipients should anticipate providing services no later than 90 days after receiving notice.
- 7. Can agencies that received Second Chance Act grants in FY 2009, 2010 or 2011 apply for funding under this solicitation?**
Yes, previous award recipients are allowed to apply for funding under this solicitation.
- 8. Can agencies applying for FY2012 Second Chance Act demonstration grants apply for funding under this solicitation?**
Yes. Applicants who are also applying under the “Second Chance Act Second Chance Act Adult Offender Reentry Program for Planning and Demonstration Projects FY 2012 Competitive Grant Announcement” must provide information to BJA on the strategies to coordinate and integrate both projects collaboratively for best outcomes for the jurisdictions.
- 9. What are the award amount and potential project length for the award?**
Awards under this program will be made for up to \$1,000,000 for a 12-month project period.

- 10. What is the selection process for grant awards under the program?**
OJP is committed to ensuring a fair and open process for awarding grants. BJA 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. BJA may use either internal peer reviewers, external peer reviewers, or a combination, to review the applications under this solicitation. 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. Applications that meet basic minimum requirements will be evaluated, scored, and rated by a peer review panel. Peer reviewers’ ratings and any resulting recommendations are advisory only. 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, and available funding.

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO), in consultation with BJA/OJP, conducts a financial review of applications for potential discretionary awards to evaluate the fiscal integrity and financial capability of applicants; examines proposed costs to determine if the Budget Detail Worksheet and Budget Narrative accurately explain project costs; and determines whether 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 (AAG), who also may give consideration to factors including, but not limited to, underserved populations, geographic diversity, strategic priorities, past performance, and available funding when making awards.

Target Population

- 11. What is the target population for this program?**
Since this solicitation will assist in implementing a comprehensive state-level recidivism reduction plan with an ambitious and bold, yet reasonable goal, each applicant’s target population should be based on documented groups of offenders that significantly contribute to increased recidivism rates.
- 12. What is the definition of a “high-risk” offender?**
There is no official definition contained in the Second Chance Act for “high-risk” offenders. Individuals should be identified as high-risk through the use of a validated risk assessment tool that compares each individual’s risk of reoffending to the jurisdiction’s or agency’s overall population. Each applicant

should identify the risk level of their target population and describe the eligibility criteria that will be used to select program participants.

13. Are there any stipulations regarding offenders convicted of a sexually related crime (sex offenders), or funds being utilized for a sex offender reentry project?

There are no stipulations on sex-related crimes under this program so sex offenders may be served with awarded funds. In addition, a sex offender reentry project is allowable if a particular jurisdiction identifies returning sex offenders as part of their target population.

Program-Specific Requirements

14. Are there mandatory requirements for submitting an application?

Section 101 of the Second Chance Act is very clear in outlining the following Mandatory Requirements that must be addressed in an application to secure funding for a comprehensive recidivism reduction program:

- 1) A reentry strategic plan that describes the jurisdiction's long-term reentry strategy, including measurable annual and 5-year performance outcomes relating to the long-term goals of increasing public safety and reducing recidivism. One goal of the plan shall be a 50 percent reduction in the rate of recidivism over a 5-year period.
- 2) A detailed reentry implementation schedule and sustainability plan for the program.
- 3) Documentation reflecting the establishment of a Reentry Task Force comprised of relevant state, tribal, territorial, or local leaders and representatives of relevant agencies, service providers, nonprofit organizations, and other key stakeholders. The Task Force should examine ways to pool resources and funding streams and collect data and best practices in offender reentry from stakeholder agencies and organizations. BJA notes that this required task force and the strategic planning requirement above provide a key opportunity for local policymakers to work together to identify and address local barriers to effective reentry, including barriers that are policy or procedural in nature.
- 4) Discussion of the role of local governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community stakeholders that will be coordinated by, and that will collaborate on, the offender reentry strategy of the applicant, and certification of the involvement of such agencies and organizations. Participants in the creation of the reentry strategy should include representatives from the fields of public safety, corrections, housing, health, education, substance abuse, children and families, victims' services, employment, and business.
- 5) Extensive evidence of collaboration with state and local government agencies overseeing health, mental health, housing, child welfare, education, substance abuse, victims services, state child support, and employment services, and with local law enforcement agencies.
- 6) An extensive discussion of the role of state corrections departments, community corrections agencies, and local jail corrections systems in ensuring successful reentry of offenders into their communities.
- 7) Documentation that reflects explicit support of the chief executive officer of the applicant state, unit of local government, territory, or Indian tribe, and how this officer will remain informed and connected to the activities of the project.
- 8) A description of the evidence-based methodology and outcome measures that will be used to evaluate the program and a discussion of how such measurements will provide a valid assessment of the impact of the program. The primary objective of the Second Chance Act is to reduce recidivism.

- 9) A description of how the project could be broadly replicated if demonstrated to be effective.
- 10) A plan for the analysis of the statutory, regulatory, rules-based, and practice-based hurdles to reintegration of offenders into the community. (Note: this may be integrated into the strategic planning requirement and guided by the local task force discussed above.)

15. Are there any priority considerations that will be given when evaluating applications for awards?

Priority consideration will be given to applicants who:

- Have established and documented an historical baseline recidivism rate which will serve as the mark for determining the level of recidivism which results from the project.
- Target high-risk offenders as determined through use of a validated risk/needs assessment instrument documented to account for significant portions of the historical recidivism. These populations may include sex offenders, mentally ill offenders, or offenders who have been dually diagnosed with major mental health disorders and alcohol or substance addictions at the same time.
- Include a comprehensive, statewide strategic plan, which includes a measurable, ambitious, but realistic, goal for reducing recidivism statewide (e.g., reduce recidivism among parolees by 10 percent in 2 years). The comprehensive strategy must include recommended changes in policy and practice, a work plan to implement those changes and build statewide support for them, and specific evidenced-based intervention/programmatic strategies clearly tied to the recidivism reduction goal.
- Provide for an independent third-party evaluation/assessment documenting the impact of the project on reducing recidivism.

16. Do evaluations in this grant constitute “research” for the purposes of applicable human subjects’ protection regulations?

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 “Other Requirements for OJP Applications” web page (www.ojp.usdoj.gov/funding/other_requirements.htm). Applicants whose proposals may involve a research or statistical component also should review the “Confidentiality” section on that web page.

Performance Measurement

17. What are the performance measures for this grant?

A preliminary list of performance measures for this grant program appears on pages 12-14 of the solicitation. Please note that performance measures are finalized after jurisdictions apply for funding. By applying for the solicitation, all applicants agree that they will report on these measures when they

are released in their final form. All applicants must demonstrate their methods for collecting data for performance measures.

18. What software or tools should grantees use to track performance measures? Are these tools provided by BJA?

Applicants will be required to report their performance measures in BJA's Performance Measurement Tool (PMT), located at www.bjaperformancetools.org. Performance measurement tool training materials and sessions are provided to all grant recipients.

19. How often are performance measures reported?

Grant recipients are required to submit three different types of reports to BJA: Financial Status Reports, Performance Reports, and Progress Reports. Progress Reports must be submitted semi-annually, while Financial Status Reports and Performance Reports must be submitted quarterly.

20. What is the definition of “recidivism”?

For purposes of this solicitation, “recidivism” is defined in accordance with the current definition utilized by the applicant agency. This definition must be clearly articulated in the application and evidence of an established historical baseline recidivism rate provided. The applicant agency must document the capacity to continue to collect and maintain relevant data to track the recidivism rate according to the definition provided during the length of the project period and beyond.

21. What sort data will grantees be required to collect?

In applying for these grants, lead grantees and their sub-grantees agree to cooperate in any and all related research efforts and program evaluations by collecting and providing enrollment and participation data during all years of the project. Applicants also agree to provide detailed **individual-level** data, in the format specified by OJP during this time period (and for the following 5 years for recidivism data). This may include *but will not be limited to* the following:

Participant characteristics:

- Age
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Criminal history
- Educational history
- Incarceration history
- Employment history
- Substance abuse history
- Mental health history
- Family history
- Social and personal history
- Post-release recidivism
- Post-release employment
- Post-release housing

Intervention information:

- Service history
- In-program services provided
- Program costs
- Duration of services
- Point of service (pre-/post-release)

Applicants further agree to implement random or other modes of participant assignment, required by the evaluation design; cooperate with all aspects of the evaluation project; and provide comparable individual-level data for comparison group members.

22. What does OJP consider to be an evidence-based program?

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. OJP's [CrimeSolutions.gov](https://www.crimsol.org) web site is one resource that applicants may use to find information about evidence-based programs in criminal justice, juvenile justice, and crime victim services.

Budget/Allowable Uses

23. What are the approved uses for funds awarded under the grant?

Approved uses for award funds in the implementation phase may include programs and services which address the following:

- 1) Use Actuarial-Based Assessment Instruments for Reentry Planning.** There is strong evidence from the research literature that offender populations should be assessed to determine criminogenic risk and needs factors and assign supervision levels and services so that appropriate interventions can be delivered. Use of assessment instruments that are reliable, validated, and normed for a specific population increase the chances that individuals will be matched with the appropriate type of treatment and reentry services. Use of risk/needs assessment tools will allow for the identification of moderate and high risk offenders and allow program interventions to focus on the people most likely to commit more crimes.
- 2) Target Criminogenic Needs that Affect Recidivism.** While offenders reentering the community have a variety of treatment and behavioral needs, which are themselves risk factors for future offending, criminogenic needs are the dynamic risk factors mostly closely associated with offending behavior. Criminogenic risk and needs factors include history of anti-social behavior; anti-social personality pattern; anti-social cognition; anti-social associates; and substance abuse. Behavioral change is possible if offenders are provided with tailored, sequential programming that addresses individual criminogenic needs that affect the risk of recidivism. Applicants are strongly urged to provide treatment interventions that target criminal thinking, especially for higher-risk offenders.
- 3) Provide Sustained Case Planning/Management in the Community.** Reentry programs should ideally begin when the individual is first incarcerated and continue when the individual is released to the community. Since most offenders are at the highest risk of re-arrest the first few months after release, services should be most intensive at the time of release to the community. Applicants are strongly urged to use consistent pre- and post-release case management and supervision that is sustained over a period of at least 6 months and is especially responsive to the offender's transition from incarceration to the community. Projects should deploy supervision policies and practices that balance sanctions and treatment.
- 4) Support a Comprehensive Range of Services for Offenders.** Based on an individual offender's risk/needs assessment, applicants are encouraged to make available a comprehensive range of programs and a process for addressing the dosage needs of individual offenders, including the following: treatment services that employ the cognitive, behavioral, and social learning techniques of modeling, role playing, reinforcement, resource provision, and cognitive restructuring; educational, literacy, vocational, and job placement services; substance abuse treatment (including alcohol abuse); housing, mental, and physical health care services; veteran-specific services as applicable; programs that encourage safe, healthy, and responsible family and parent-child relationships, and enhance family reunification, as appropriate; and mentoring.

Applicants should use evidenced-based programs proven to work and ensure the delivery of services is high quality.

- 5) Target Places Where Crime and Recidivism Rates are the Highest.** Applicants are encouraged to use available data to determine geographic areas/places which reflect higher than average crime rates and concomitant high recidivism rates.

24. Is there a match requirement for this program?

As required by the Second Chance Act, a match is required for all applications. A grant made under this program may not cover more than 50 percent of the total costs of the project being funded. The applicant must identify the source of the 50 percent non-federal portion of the budget and how match funds will be used. The recipient of a grant must provide a minimum of 25 percent of the total project cost in cash match, and 25 percent of the total project cost may be matched by making in-kind contributions of goods or services that are directly related to the purpose for which the grant was awarded. Federal funds received and cash match provided by the grantee shall be used to supplement, not supplant, non-federal funds that would otherwise be available for the activities funded under this section.

The applicant must identify the source of the 25 percent non-federal cash portion of the budget and how both cash and in-kind match funds will be used.

Match Waiver:

The Attorney General may waive the match requirement upon a determination of fiscal hardship. To be considered for a waiver of match, a letter of request signed by the Authorized Representative must be submitted with the application defining the fiscal hardship. Fiscal hardship may be defined in terms related to reductions in overall correctional budgets, furloughing or reductions in force of correctional staff or other similar documented actions which have resulted in severe budget reductions.

Note: Once incorporated into the OJP-approved budget, the match becomes mandatory and subject to audit. Further, if a successful applicant's proposed match exceeds the required match amount, the match amount that is incorporated into its OJP-approved budget is mandatory and subject to audit.

25. What is acceptable as a cash match? If an applicant receives other federal funds that support components of their reentry strategy (such as employment or substance abuse treatment programs), do those other federal funds constitute an acceptable cash match?

Federal funds received and cash match provided by the grantee must supplement, not supplant, non-federal funds that would otherwise be available for the activities funded under this section. The 25 percent hard cash match required for demonstration projects must be either state general fund dollars or, perhaps, private foundation match dollars.

26. Is the cash match an up-front payment or due by the end of the period?

When the grant is submitted the budget will have to reflect the 25 percent cash match requirement and that money will need to be allocated in the budget to indicate specific services that it will support. Money commitment needs to be upfront and the budget needs to reflect how that 25 percent cash match and 25 percent in-kind is allocated.

27. Are there any limitations on how award funds can be used for employee compensation?

With respect to any award of more than \$250,000 made under this solicitation, federal funds may not be used to pay total cash compensation (salary plus bonuses) to any employee of the award recipient at a rate that exceeds 110 percent 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. The 2012 salary table for SES employees is available at www.opm.gov/oca/12tables/indexSES.asp.

Note: A recipient may compensate an employee at a higher 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.)

28. Should grant applicants budget for any particular training or technical assistance?

Applicants must budget funding to travel to Department of Justice-sponsored grant meetings. Applicants should estimate the costs of travel and accommodations for three staff to attend two meetings in Washington D.C.

29. Can the grant be extended beyond twelve months?

Jurisdictions can apply for a no-cost extension at the end of the grant period if additional time is needed to spend awarded grant funds.

30. Will there be an opportunity to renew this funding to extend the program, or apply for funding for new projects in the future?

Additional funding for grant programs is subject to the availability of funds within BJA's budget, which is based on the federal budget passed each year by Congress. Each applicant should have an implementation plan that provides sustainability for the project following the end of the grant period.

31. Can funding be used to cover the costs of meetings, conferences, or events hosted by the grantee?

No OJP funding can be used to purchase food and/or beverages for any meeting, conference, training, or other event. Exceptions to this restriction may be made only in cases where such sustenance is not otherwise available (i.e., extremely remote areas), or where a special presentation at a conference requires a plenary address where there is no other time for sustenance to be obtained. Such an exception would require prior approval from OJP. This restriction does not apply to water provided at no cost, but does apply to any and all other refreshments, regardless of the size or nature of the meeting. Additionally, this restriction does not impact direct payment of per diem amounts to individuals in a travel status under your organization's travel policy.

Updated Department of Justice and OJP guidance on conference planning, minimization of costs, and conference cost reporting will be forthcoming and will be accessible on the OJP web site at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/funding/funding.htm.

Collaboration

32. Where can I find organizations to partner with for data collection, performance measurement, and evaluation?

Applicants are encouraged to consider a partnership with a local research organization that can assist with data collection, performance measurement, and local evaluations. One resource that applicants may be interested in using is the e-Consortium for University Centers and Researchers for Partnership with Justice Practitioners. The purpose of this e-Consortium is to provide a resource to local, state, federal, and other groups who seek to connect to nearby (or other) university researchers and centers on partnerships and projects that are mutually beneficial to the criminal justice community. The e-Consortium can be found online at www.gmuconsortium.org/.

Technical Application Questions

33. Does the budget narrative count against the 20 page application limit?

No.

34. What is the selection process for grant awards under this program?

BJA reviews applications to ensure applications submitted under this solicitation meet basic minimum requirements. Those applications that do are peer reviewed based on the solicitation requirements. The Assistant Attorney General makes all final grant award decisions.

Application Assistance

35. Is there someone specific to contact with questions about the process or program?

For technical assistance with submitting the application, contact the Grants.gov Customer Support Hotline at 800–518–4726 or 606–545–5035 or via e-mail to support@grants.gov.

Note: The [Grants.gov](#) Support Hotline hours of operation are 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, except federal holidays.

For assistance with any other requirement of this solicitation, contact the BJA Justice Information Center at 1–877–927–5657, via e-mail to JIC@telesishq.com, or by [live web chat](#). The BJA Justice Information Center (JIC) hours of operation are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. eastern time, Monday through Friday, and 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. eastern time on the solicitation close date.

36. What resources are available to assist me with submitting a competitive grant application?

BJA has several resources for assisting you with developing a competitive grant application. The BJA Grant Writing and Management Academy provides several training modules, including Before Applying for BJA Funds and Applying for BJA funds. These training modules assist you with developing an application and provide information on what steps to take prior to submitting an application. Those and additional modules can be found by going to <http://bja.ncjrs.gov/gwma/index.html>.