

**Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)**  
**Smart Probation: Reducing Prison Populations, Saving Money, and Creating Safer Communities**

**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 Smart Probation grants support the development and implementation of evidence-based probation programs that effectively address the needs of offenders, improve probation success rates and reduce recidivism. Strategy development and implementation should rely on risk/needs assessments that reflect the risk of recidivism for targeted offenders.

**2. Can applicants propose projects related to “parole”?**

No – Based upon legislation applications under this solicitation are limited to “probation” projects.

**3. What are the eligibility requirements under this program?**

State and local government agencies and federally recognized Indian Tribes are eligible to apply under this program.

**4. What is the deadline for submitting an application?**

All applications are due by 11:59 p.m. eastern time on May 21, 2012. Please refer to “How to Apply” beginning on page 11 of the solicitation for more information.

**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. What are the award amount and potential project length for awards?**

Awards will provide up to \$500,000 for a project period of twenty-four (24) months.

**8. Can the grant be extended beyond 24 months?**

Grantee will be able to apply for a no-cost extension at the end of the grant period if additional time is needed to spend awarded grant funds.

**9. 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.

**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.

### **Program-Specific Requirements**

#### **14. Are there mandatory program related requirements for submitting an application?**

No, but applicants must propose projects that include at least one of the approved uses listed on pages 4-6 of the solicitation.

#### **15. Are there any Priority Considerations that will be given when evaluating applications for awards?**

Priority Consideration will be given to applicants who:

- Clearly demonstrate the appropriate use and integration of evidence-based principles such as the application of risk/needs assessment.
- Target medium- to high-risk offenders, high-needs offenders, or those with special needs such as offenders with mentally illness, female offenders, or sex offenders.
- Document a baseline recidivism rate based on historical data.
- Provide a historical record of comprehensive data collection and the ability to track program participation.
- Employ a program strategy that includes collaboration among a variety of government and private agencies.
- Establish a relationship with an objective entity such as a university or nationally-recognized expert who can provide an assessment/evaluation of the impact of the proposed strategies.

#### **16. What makes a program or practice “evidence-based”?**

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.

**17. 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.

**18. Should projects be focused on adult or juvenile target populations?**

Under this solicitation projects should be focused on “adult” target populations. Understandably, the age range and classification of adult populations varies in different jurisdictions and could potentially include individuals 16 years or older that are categorized as adults, as well as 18 years or older. However, these adult populations should include individuals adjudicated as adults. As a result, the individuals for proposed Smart Probation projects should include adults, and the applicant should provide justification supporting their jurisdiction’s definition of adult target populations, specific age range, etc.

**Performance Measurement**

**19. What are the performance measures for this grant?**

A preliminary list of performance measures for this grant program appears on pages 8-10 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.

**20. 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](http://www.bjaperformancetools.org). Performance measurement tool training materials and sessions are provided to all grant recipients.

**21. 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.

**22. Is there a specific recidivism reduction goal for this project?**

Applicants are not required to achieve a specific recidivism rate reduction. However, successful applicants are required to report the recidivism rates for participants enrolled in a smart probation program funded through this grant. Grantees are also required to calculate a baseline recidivism rate for the proposed target population and the percentage decrease in the recidivism rate for program participants from that baseline.

**23. What is the definition of “recidivism”?**

The preliminary list of performance measures for this grant program includes the following recidivism indicators:

- Number of participants who had a technical violation of supervised release while participating in the program.
- Number of participants who were arrested while participating in the program.
- Number of participants who were convicted while participating in the program.
- Number of participants who had a revocation of the terms of supervised release while participating in the program.
- Number of participants who were reincarcerated while participating in the program.

**24. Will successful applicants be required to track and report recidivism only for those offenders participating in the program, or for the agency's whole population?**

Grantees will be required to report regularly on recidivism and other outcomes for all program participants, not for the larger population of individuals supervised by the grantee.

**Budget/Allowable Uses**

**25. What are the approved uses for awarded funds?**

Applicants should propose projects that include at least one of the following approved uses of award funds, which appear on pages 4-6 of the solicitation:

- Increase the capacity of state, local or tribal communities to help probation agencies improve supervision strategies. This may include collecting and analyzing community supervision data, providing technical assistance and training resources to community supervision staff, promoting evidence-based principles and practices, and improving interagency coordination around community supervision.
- Test new policies and strategies in community supervision and treatment. These demonstration grants should be used to implement innovative strategies (including the use of information technology) to help agencies target high-risk probationers for intensive intervention and supervision activities. The results of demonstration projects should be evaluated by an objective third-party organization.
- Work with judicial and prosecutor counterparts to analyze and implement changes to policies and practices that guide community supervision conditions and revocation procedures. This may include integrating risk/need assessment into supervision condition and revocation policies.
- Develop or promote the integration of probation supervision strategies and tools to facilitate effective offender reentry. This may include the development and testing of tools that effectively integrate risk assessment of probationers with substance abuse, mental health, and education needs. It also includes the training of corrections personnel in using assessment results to inform the delivery of services to probationers.
- Expand collaboration and strategic partnerships between community supervision agencies and law enforcement. This includes the consolidation of risk assessments and sharing of information across law enforcement and community supervision agencies, as well as the integration of resources used to supervise high risk probationers.
- Evaluate the results of the new strategies and tools tested through this initiative. Evaluations should focus on how well these strategies have helped sites integrate their probation resources and manage the growth of their corrections system.

**26. Are there any specific items that grant applicants need to include in their budget?**

- At least 25 percent of the total grant award should be used for data collection, performance measurement, and performance assessment.
- 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.

**27. Is there a match requirement for this program?**

No, this solicitation does not require a match. A voluntary match amount may be incorporated into the budget proposal, but if approved it will be considered mandatory and subject to audit.

**28. Can program funds be used to hire staff?**

Grant funds can be used to employ staff, but they cannot be used to supplant existing services. In addition, the employed staff positions must be in the context of the overall program or project.

**29. 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. 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.

**30. Are there exceptions to these limitations on employee compensation?**

The limitation on compensation rates allowable under an award may be waived on an individual basis at the discretion of the Assistant Attorney General (AAG) for OJP. An applicant requesting a waiver should include a detailed justification in the budget narrative of its application. The justification should include the particular qualifications and expertise of the individual, the uniqueness of the service being provided, the individual's specific knowledge of the program or project being undertaken with award funds.

**31. If grantees cannot hire new employees to fill the aforementioned positions, can program funds be used to outsource these positions?**

Yes, grant funds can be used to subcontract or outsource personnel positions or services for offenders.

**32. 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](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/funding/funding.htm).

**33. May program funds be used to employ an outside evaluator?**

Program funds may be used to employ an outside evaluator. BJA will not require each individual grantee to provide for an independent evaluation, but those applicants that do will receive priority consideration.

**Technical Application Questions**

**34. What needs to be included in an application?**

Applicants should refer to the application checklist on page 20 to ensure they have provided all information requested in the solicitation before submitting an application. An application that does not include all of these elements will not be considered by BJA.

**35. Is there a page limit for applications?**

While there is not an overall page limit, the abstract should not exceed 2 pages, and the program narrative must not exceed 15 pages.

**36. Can more than one jurisdiction within a state, including the state, apply for the grant?**

Yes, it is possible for several cities, counties and the state to apply since all are independent jurisdictions.

**37. Is there a percentage breakdown for allocation to state versus local governments?**

No. BJA is cognizant of the need for geographical distribution as well as some level of equity among states, localities and Tribes.

**38. How are submissions from multiple jurisdictions in the same state viewed?**

Submissions from multiple jurisdictions in the same state will be viewed on the individual merit of each application that meets solicitation requirements.

**Application Assistance**

**39. 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 via e-mail to [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). The Grants.gov Support Hotline hours of operation are 24 hours, 7 days a week, except federal holidays.

For assistance with any other requirement of this solicitation, contact the BJA Justice Information Center (JIC) at 1-877-927-5657 or [JIC@telesishq.com](mailto:JIC@telesishq.com). The BJA Justice Information Center 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.

**40. 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://bj.ncjrs.gov/gwma/index.html>.

**41. What other resources are available on evidence-based strategies for probation supervision?**

- A Ten-Step Guide to Transforming Probation Departments to Reduce Recidivism: [www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/documents/0000/1150/A\\_Ten-Step\\_Guide\\_to\\_Transforming\\_Probation\\_Departments\\_to\\_Reduce\\_Recidivism.pdf](http://www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/documents/0000/1150/A_Ten-Step_Guide_to_Transforming_Probation_Departments_to_Reduce_Recidivism.pdf).
- Putting Public Safety First: 13 Strategies for Successful Supervision and Reentry: [www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411800\\_public\\_safety\\_first.pdf](http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411800_public_safety_first.pdf).
- Maximum Impact: Targeting Supervision on Higher-Risk People, Places and Times: [www.pewcenteronthestates.org/report\\_detail.aspx?id=54209](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/report_detail.aspx?id=54209).
- OJP's [CrimeSolutions.gov](http://CrimeSolutions.gov) web site provides information about evidence-based programs in criminal justice, juvenile justice, and crime victim services.