

Proposal
Implementation Plan for
Recovery Act Justice Assistance Formula Grant Funds

*The Office of Policy and Management is requesting public comment on the proposed **Implementation Plan for Connecticut's Recovery Act Justice Assistance Formula Grant.***

Please email comments by April 20, 2009 to: OPM.JAGRECOVERY@CT.GOV

*The **Recovery Act Justice Assistance Formula Grant (JAG)** program is authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Public Law 111-5) (the "Recovery Act") and by 42 U.S.C. 3751(a).*

The Recovery Act JAG program is a federal grant program administered by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Justice Programs (USDJ OJP). Each State is eligible to receive funding according to a formula, the funds are granted to a "State Administrative Agency" (SAA) which is responsible for oversight and management of the funds. The SAA for Connecticut is the Office of Policy and Management.

USDJ OJP requires that projects funded under the Recovery Act should further one or more of the general purposes of the Recovery Act, which are to preserve and create jobs and promote economic recovery; to assist those most impacted by the recession; to provide investments needed to increase economic efficiency by spurring technological advances in science and health; to invest in transportation, environmental protection, or other infrastructure that will provide long-term economic benefits; and to stabilize state and local government budgets.

Connecticut is eligible to receive \$12,479,843.00 in federal JAG funds under the Recovery Act. This is a no-match grant with a 48-month grant period. Given that the Recovery JAG grant is a "one-time" award, the federal agency has encouraged the State to propose activities and deliverables that can be accomplished without additional USDJ and state funding.

The State may use the JAG funds to "support all components of the criminal justice system, from multi-jurisdictional drug and gang task forces to crime prevention and domestic violence programs, courts, corrections, treatment, and justice information sharing initiatives. JAG funded projects may address crime through the provision of services directly to individuals and/or communities and by improving the effectiveness and efficiency of criminal justice systems, processes, and procedures." <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/recoveryJAG/JAGrecoveryState.pdf>

The state is required to develop an Implementation Plan specific to the purposes of the Recovery Act and make the Plan available for public comment.

We are seeking comment on the following proposed types of projects to be implemented with the support of the Recovery JAG funds. The final Implementation Plan will be submitted to the federal agency for review and approval.

Proposed Purpose Areas

1) CT JAG Program (Pass-Through Grants to Local Governments)

As required by the federal program regulations, \$4.3 million in the RECOVERY ACT JAG funds will be distributed to local governments based on population data and crime rate. The list of grants for each local government may be viewed at www.ct.gov/opm/recovery. The funds will be available to those towns that qualified for a JAG grant directly from USDOJ (known as the “Local Direct JAG” program), as well as those local governments that were deemed ineligible for direct funding from USDOJ.

Those towns that receive police services from the State Police or a Resident State Trooper will have the option of waiving their allocation of funds to the State Police to be administered on their behalf.

Local governments must allocate their funds to services and activities that support the goals of the Recovery Act. Funds may be used for technical assistance, training, personnel, equipment, supplies, contractual support, and information systems for criminal justice, as well as criminal justice-related research and evaluation activities that will improve or enhance the following components of the criminal justice system:

- Law enforcement programs.
- Prevention and education programs.
- Community corrections programs.
- Drug treatment and enforcement programs.
- Planning, evaluation, and technology improvement programs.
- Crime victim and witness programs (other than compensation).

2) Expand the Department of Correction (DOC) Case Management Information System

We propose to expand DOC’s existing case management information system to increase information sharing between criminal justice agencies and improve oversight and monitoring of offenders in the community. The current system is limited both in its functional use and ability to pass information between DOC, Board of Pardons and Paroles (BOPP) and police departments. An upgraded system will create a continuum of information flow from the point of incarceration to parole, probation and community supervision. Integration of new reporting functions will produce more accurate data and statistics to support more cost-effective management of facilities and criminal justice services. Employment opportunities will be

created for a consultant to design the expanded system including modifying and testing the code to meet additional business requirements, setting-up hardware infrastructure, developing reporting platform and integrating databases. It is anticipated that these technology improvements will positively impact the budgets of local and state governments by allowing the agencies more timely and efficient access to information, as well as improving community safety.

3) Automated Fingerprint Information systems (AFIS)

We propose to upgrade the functionality and capacity of the current AFIS to enable law enforcement agencies rapid access to offender data and to establish an automated fingerprint based background check system for applicants. The existing system does not have the capability to process the high (and increasing) volume of fingerprint data entries to rapidly respond to police inquiries. In some cases, a delayed response from the AFIS may interfere with apprehension of offenders and investigations. The upgraded system will enable additional police departments to submit electronic fingerprints to the database rather than using a more time-consuming paper submission process. In this initiative, the additional computer equipment, associated training, and additional required maintenance support will respond to the stimulus objective while establishing more effective and efficient law enforcement public safety practices.

4) Statewide and Regional Drug Task Force

We propose to expand the operation of specialized multi-jurisdictional task force that conduct investigations concerning narcotics and illicit drugs. The task force operates in both urban and suburban areas of the state to target and suppress criminal activity associated with the manufacturing, distribution and selling of narcotics and controlled substances. These illegal activities have a correlative negative impact on the economic stability and quality of life of many communities across the state. Widespread drug trade, sale and distribution along with associated criminal activity besiege neighborhoods and contribute to a loss of customers for businesses, vacant properties and diminished residential marketability. Currently, the economic crisis is limiting the ability for law enforcement agencies to participate in multi-jurisdictional drug crime initiatives. The proposed funding will allow the task force to expand investigations and enable additional officers to participate in the task force. It is anticipated that expanded law enforcement activity will have a net direct effect on economic stability and quality of life of our communities with safer neighborhoods and environments that support local businesses.

5) Increase the Number of DNA Samples Taken in DOC

We propose to increase the number of DNA samples taken on DOC inmates. The CT Dept of Correction presently takes DNA samples from offenders with felony convictions prior to release. Sex offenders provide DNA samples upon entry into the DOC. Therefore, offenders with non-sex offenses may be incarcerated for years before DNA is available to community law enforcement investigators. The availability of the DNA supports early release decision making and ultimately public safety. This proposal is to complete DNA sampling for all offenders with felony convictions upon entry into the DOC. This will include sampling the backlog of offenders who will not be eligible for release for years, as well as those serving life sentences. The expected outcomes are to solve more criminal cases through the use of DNA, avoid wrongful conviction, and bring closure for families and victims. Accomplishing this will require hiring up to seven (7) temporary staff and purchasing ample DNA test kits to address the backlog and complete sampling on newly sentenced offenders and work with the CT State Police forensic crime labs. Increased testing and processing of DNA at DOC and CT State Police crime labs will create new job possibilities in criminal justice and public safety, further spurring economic growth.

6) Expedite Processing of DNA Samples at the DPS Forensic Laboratory.

We propose to reduce the “back-log” of DNA samples that require processing at the DPS Forensic Laboratory. Currently, there are three durational laboratory technologists responsible for processing DNA samples from convicted felons and entering information into a national database used by law enforcement agencies across the nation. There is a “back-log” of cases awaiting analysis and approximately 800 new samples per month are collected. The durational positions are scheduled to expire in July 2009; the proposed JAG funding will preserve the durational jobs for an additional 36 months to address the “back-log” of samples.

7) Increased Visibility of State Police Vehicles

We propose to increase the visibility of state police vehicles to reduce risk of collisions and injuries that result from on-coming vehicles crashing into police cruisers. Reflective tape chevrons will be placed on the rear bumper to enhance visibility and conspicuity. Improving nighttime visibility of emergency vehicles will reduce speeds, reduce accidents and improve safety and enhance public image of the agency. Employment opportunities will be created for the vendors who equip and outfit state police cruisers, as well the manufactures of the reflective material. The department anticipates marking over 700 state police cruisers. This project will save law enforcement lives, reduce workmen compensation claims, enhance highway safety, and provide additional employment opportunities for vendors and manufactures involved in the public safety market.

8) Expand Staff at Domestic Violence Shelters for 24/7 coverage

In response to the need for greater access to shelter-based services for domestic violence victims, we propose to create 3-4 FTEs positions to provide expanded staffing and coverage in domestic violence shelters. Currently, the DV shelters around the state have varying hours and levels of staff coverage. Some are unable to provide access to shelter-based services on a “24/7 basis”. The new positions will enable 3-4 shelters to increase their hours, staff and service levels for the duration of the grant period. (Additional funds are also proposed through a separate stimulus fund, the STOP Violence Against Women Formula grant)

9) Establish a Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner Program (SANE/SAFE) :

We propose a pilot project that will provide centrally coordinated staff and services to ensure that adult and adolescent sexual assault victims have rapid access to forensic exams. Currently, some area hospitals lack practitioners with the expertise and training to perform forensic exams on sexual assault victims in a timely way. Often, victims must wait several hours until a qualified nurse or physician is available to collect the forensic evidence. A coordinated pool of qualified examiners will provide victims with the appropriate level of care, as well as ensure that evidence is collected according to a uniform procedure leading to better investigations and successful prosecution of offenders. Employment opportunities will be created for a community-based provider to serve as the Coordinator for the project, manage the services and training program and collaborate with criminal justice agencies.

(Additional funds are also proposed through a separate stimulus fund, the STOP Violence Against Women Formula grant)

10) Assessment and Evaluation Services for DOC

We propose to develop evaluation and assessment projects to assist DOC in providing more effective facility-based and community-based corrections programs that will help reduce future costs associated with repeat criminal behavior as well as increase safety for the community by supporting successful re-integration of offenders into society. Independent evaluators will be hired to assess DOC programs and services particularly those programs involving women offenders and community re-entry initiatives. One of the projects will create a gender –specific classification and assessment system to enable DOC to provide more effective gender-responsive programming and move lower-risk women offenders more quickly through the

system. The information generated from the assessment tools will also assist BOPP in determining parole status for women offenders. Employment opportunities will be created for consultants to design the assessment instruments, develop a classification system, identify appropriate use of the instruments across multiple agencies and provide training to program staff.

11) Translation of Community Outreach and Education Media and Materials

We propose to create a public education initiative to provide non-English speaking communities with linguistically appropriate resources that will help them navigate the court system, as well as find treatment and prevention services and intervention programs, including victim advocacy services and specialized programs for youth.

Existing programs and services can become more effective by providing communities with culturally competent documents, brochures and other guidance materials. Employment opportunities will be created for community-based organizations to assess the informational needs for specific populations, translate documents and reference material into electronic and printed media and distribute to communities.