

Certification Form Quick Tips: External Investigations

Bureau of Justice Assistance, Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program – Formula

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) seeks to fund improvements to forensic science and medical examiner/coroner (ME/C) services through the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program (Coverdell Program). Under the Formula Coverdell Program, [State Administering Agencies](#) (SAAs) may apply for funds to improve forensic science and ME/C services provided by laboratories operated by the state or units of local government. The Coverdell law requires each applicant to certify the existence of a government entity that has an appropriate process in place to conduct independent external investigations into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct committed by individuals that substantially affects the integrity of the forensic results provided. Such individuals include employees or contractors of any forensic laboratory system, ME/C office, law enforcement storage facility, or medical facility in the state that will receive a portion of the award amount. The certification form submitted to BJA must be executed by an official who is both familiar with the requirements of the certification and authorized to make the certification on behalf of the applicant agency. Certifications made on behalf of subrecipients of award funds—rather than those made on behalf of the applicant agency—are not acceptable to satisfy the requirement.



Refer to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for details on certification requirements and the link to the certification template. Additional questions regarding certification and authorization requirements should be directed to your assigned BJA Policy and Programs Office representatives.

Understanding and Meeting Independent External Investigation Guidance and Criteria – Key Considerations

Identify the existing government entity (or entities) that can conduct independent external investigations. Applicants must provide, prior to receiving award funds, the name(s) of the existing government entity (or entities) that possesses (or possess) the authority to conduct independent external investigations into incidents that affect the integrity of the forensic results provided. Scenarios where it is required to list more than one entity include, but are not limited to, (1) when no single entity has an appropriate process in place with respect to allegations of serious negligence as well as serious misconduct, and (2) when no single entity has an appropriate process in place with respect to allegations concerning contractors as well as employees.

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Define the process for referring allegations requiring independent external investigations. Recipients (and subrecipients) of Coverdell Program funds should have a process in place that delineates the referral of allegations of serious negligence or misconduct substantially affecting the integrity of forensic results to an existing government entity (or entities) that possesses (or possess) the authority and that has (or have) an appropriate process to conduct independent external investigations.

Review the statutory elements and guidance before determining whether a certification may properly be made. The applicant should review the certification language and ensure that each element is met prior to signing and submitting the certification (e.g., the entity to perform independent external investigations is an existing government entity that has an appropriate process in place with the relevant authority to conduct an independent, external investigation into allegations).



The NOFO presents guidance and examples designed to illustrate elements of the external investigation certification that the official authorized to make the certification on behalf of the applicant agency must consider in determining whether the certification may properly be made.

Preparing to Submit the Certification Form – Key Considerations

Ensure that the certification template is used. BJA provides a template certification form that must be signed by the individual authorized to complete the certification.

Review the certification requirements. Applicants must review the requirements of the certification before determining whether the certification can be properly completed.

Verify qualifications prior to submission. The form should be executed and signed by someone familiar with the requirements of the certification and authorized to sign the certification.

Important Reminder: A false statement in the certification or in the grant application that it supports may be the subject of criminal prosecution, including under 18 U.S.C. § 1001 and/or 1621 and 34 U.S.C. §§ 10271–10273. Office of Justice Programs grants, including certification provided in connection with such grants, are subject to review by the Office of Justice Programs and/or by the Department of Justice’s Office of the Inspector General.