§ 14135. The Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Grant Program

(a) Authorization of grants

The Attorney General may make grants to eligible States or units of local government for use by the State or unit of local government for the following purposes:

(1) To carry out, for inclusion in the Combined DNA Index System of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, DNA analyses of samples collected under applicable legal authority.
(2) To carry out, for inclusion in such Combined DNA Index System, DNA analyses of samples from crime scenes, including samples from rape kits, samples from other sexual assault evidence, and samples taken in cases without an identified suspect.
(3) To increase the capacity of laboratories owned by the State or by units of local government to carry out DNA analyses of samples specified in paragraph (1) or (2).
(4) To collect DNA samples specified in paragraph (1).
(5) To ensure that DNA testing and analysis of samples from crimes, including sexual assault and other serious violent crimes, are carried out in a timely manner.

(b) Eligibility

For a State or unit of local government to be eligible to receive a grant under this section, the chief executive officer of the State or unit of local government shall submit to the Attorney General an application in such form and containing such information as the Attorney General may require. The application shall, as required by the Attorney General—

(1) provide assurances that the State or unit of local government has implemented, or will implement not later than 120 days after the date of such application, a comprehensive plan for the expeditious DNA analysis of samples in accordance with this section;
(2) include a certification that each DNA analysis carried out under the plan shall be maintained pursuant to the privacy requirements described in section 14132 (b)(3) of this title;
(3) include a certification that the State or unit of local government has determined, by statute, rule, or regulation, those offenses under State law that shall be treated for purposes of this section as qualifying State offenses;
(4) specify the allocation that the State or unit of local government shall make, in using grant amounts to carry out DNA analyses of samples, as between samples specified in subsection (a)(1) of this section and samples specified in subsection (a)(2) of this section;
(5) specify that portion of grant amounts that the State or unit of local government shall use for the purpose specified in subsection (a)(3) of this section;
(6) if submitted by a unit of local government, certify that the unit of local government has taken, or is taking, all necessary steps to ensure that it is eligible to include, directly or through a State law enforcement agency, all analyses of samples for which it has requested funding in the Combined DNA Index System; and
(7) specify that portion of grant amounts that the State or unit of local government shall use for the purpose specified in subsection (a)(4) of this section.

(c) Formula for distribution of grants

(1) In general
The Attorney General shall distribute grant amounts, and establish appropriate grant conditions under this section, in conformity with a formula or formulas that are designed to effectuate a distribution of funds among eligible States and units of local government that—

(A) maximizes the effective utilization of DNA technology to solve crimes and protect public safety; and

(B) allocates grants among eligible entities fairly and efficiently to address jurisdictions in which significant backlogs exist, by considering—

(i) the number of offender and casework samples awaiting DNA analysis in a jurisdiction;

(ii) the population in the jurisdiction; and

(iii) the number of part 1 violent crimes in the jurisdiction.

(2) Minimum amount

The Attorney General shall allocate to each State not less than 0.50 percent of the total amount appropriated in a fiscal year for grants under this section, except that the United States Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands shall each be allocated 0.125 percent of the total appropriation.

(3) Limitation

Grant amounts distributed under paragraph (1) shall be awarded to conduct DNA analyses of samples from casework or from victims of crime under subsection (a)(2) of this section in accordance with the following limitations:

(A) For fiscal year 2009, not less than 40 percent of the grant amounts shall be awarded for purposes under subsection (a)(2) of this section.

(B) For each of the fiscal years 2010 through 2014, not less than 40 percent of the grant amounts shall be awarded for purposes under subsection (a)(2).

(d) Analysis of samples

(1) In general

A plan pursuant to subsection (b)(1) of this section shall require that, except as provided in paragraph (3), each DNA analysis be carried out in a laboratory that satisfies quality assurance standards and is—

(A) operated by the State or a unit of local government; or

(B) operated by a private entity pursuant to a contract with the State or a unit of local government.

(2) Quality assurance standards

(A) The Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation shall maintain and make available to States and units of local government a description of quality assurance protocols and practices that the Director considers adequate to assure the quality of a forensic laboratory.

(B) For purposes of this section, a laboratory satisfies quality assurance standards if the laboratory satisfies the quality control requirements described in paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 14132 (b) of this title.

(3) Use of vouchers or contracts for certain purposes

(A) In general

A grant for the purposes specified in paragraph (1), (2), or (5) of subsection (a) of this section may be made in the form of a voucher or contract for laboratory services, even if the laboratory makes a reasonable profit for the services.

(B) Redemption
A voucher or contract under subparagraph (A) may be redeemed at a laboratory operated on a nonprofit or for-profit basis, by a private entity that satisfies quality assurance standards and has been approved by the Attorney General.

(C) Payments

The Attorney General may use amounts authorized under subsection (j) of this section to make payments to a laboratory described under subparagraph (B).

(e) Restrictions on use of funds

(1) Nonsupplanting

Funds made available pursuant to this section shall not be used to supplant State or local government funds, but shall be used to increase the amount of funds that would, in the absence of Federal funds, be made available from State or local government sources for the purposes of this Act.

(2) Administrative costs

A State or unit of local government may not use more than 3 percent of the funds it receives from this section for administrative expenses.

(f) Reports to the Attorney General

Each State or unit of local government which receives a grant under this section shall submit to the Attorney General, for each year in which funds from a grant received under this section is expended, a report at such time and in such manner as the Attorney General may reasonably require, which contains—

(1) a summary of the activities carried out under the grant and an assessment of whether such activities are meeting the needs identified in the application; and

(2) such other information as the Attorney General may require.

(g) Reports to Congress

Not later than 90 days after the end of each fiscal year for which grants are made under this section, the Attorney General shall submit to the Congress a report that includes—

(1) the aggregate amount of grants made under this section to each State or unit of local government for such fiscal year;

(2) a summary of the information provided by States or units of local government receiving grants under this section; and

(3) a description of the priorities and plan for awarding grants among eligible States and units of local government, and how such plan will ensure the effective use of DNA technology to solve crimes and protect public safety.

(h) Expenditure records

(1) In general

Each State or unit of local government which receives a grant under this section shall keep records as the Attorney General may require to facilitate an effective audit of the receipt and use of grant funds received under this section.

(2) Access

Each State or unit of local government which receives a grant under this section shall make available, for the purpose of audit and examination, such records as are related to the receipt or use of any such grant.

(i) Definition

For purposes of this section, the term “State” means a State of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands.
(j) Authorization of appropriations

There are authorized to be appropriated to the Attorney General for grants under subsection (a) $151,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2009 through 2014.

(k) Use of funds for accreditation and audits

The Attorney General may distribute not more than 1 percent of the grant amounts under subsection (j) of this section—

(1) to States or units of local government to defray the costs incurred by laboratories operated by each such State or unit of local government in preparing for accreditation or reaccreditation;

(2) in the form of additional grants to States, units of local government, or nonprofit professional organizations of persons actively involved in forensic science and nationally recognized within the forensic science community—

(A) to defray the costs of external audits of laboratories operated by such State or unit of local government, which participates in the National DNA Index System, to determine whether the laboratory is in compliance with quality assurance standards;

(B) to assess compliance with any plans submitted to the National Institute of Justice, which detail the use of funds received by States or units of local government under this Act; and

(C) to support future capacity building efforts; and

(3) in the form of additional grants to nonprofit professional associations actively involved in forensic science and nationally recognized within the forensic science community to defray the costs of training persons who conduct external audits of laboratories operated by States and units of local government and which participate in the National DNA Index System.

(l) Use of funds for other forensic sciences

The Attorney General may award a grant under this section to a State or unit of local government to alleviate a backlog of cases with respect to a forensic science other than DNA analysis if the State or unit of local government—

(1) certifies to the Attorney General that in such State or unit—

(A) all of the purposes set forth in subsection (a) of this section have been met;

(B) a significant backlog of casework is not waiting for DNA analysis; and

(C) there is no need for significant laboratory equipment, supplies, or additional personnel for timely DNA processing of casework or offender samples; and

(2) demonstrates to the Attorney General that such State or unit requires assistance in alleviating a backlog of cases involving a forensic science other than DNA analysis.

(m) External audits and remedial efforts

In the event that a laboratory operated by a State or unit of local government which has received funds under this Act has undergone an external audit conducted to determine whether the laboratory is in compliance with standards established by the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and, as a result of such audit, identifies measures to remedy deficiencies with respect to the compliance by the laboratory with such standards, the State or unit of local government shall implement any such remediation as soon as practicable.

References in Text


Codification

Section was enacted as part of the DNA Analysis Backlog Elimination Act of 2000, and not as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 which enacted this chapter.

Amendments

2008—Subsec. (c)(3). Pub. L. 110–360, § 2(1)(B), which directed redesignation of subpar. (E) and subpar. (A), was executed by redesignating subpar. (E) as (A), to reflect the probable intent of Congress.

Subsec. (c)(3)(A). Pub. L. 110–360, § 2(1)(A), struck out subpar. (A) which read as follows: “For fiscal year 2005, not less than 50 percent of the grant amounts shall be awarded for purposes under subsection (a)(2) of this section.”

Subsec. (c)(3)(B) to (D). Pub. L. 110–360, § 2(1)(A), (C), added subpar. (B) and struck out former subpars. (B) to (D) which read as follows:

“(B) For fiscal year 2006, not less than 50 percent of the grant amounts shall be awarded for purposes under subsection (a)(2) of this section.

“(C) For fiscal year 2007, not less than 45 percent of the grant amounts shall be awarded for purposes under subsection (a)(2) of this section.

“(D) For fiscal year 2008, not less than 40 percent of the grant amounts shall be awarded for purposes under subsection (a)(2) of this section.”

Subsec. (j). Pub. L. 110–360, § 2(2), amended subsec. (j) generally. Prior to amendment, subsec. (j) authorized to be appropriated to the Attorney General for grants under subsection (a) $151,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2005 through 2009.

2006—Subsec. (a)(1). Pub. L. 109–162 substituted “collected under applicable legal authority” for “taken from individuals convicted of a qualifying State offense (as determined under subsection (b)(3) of this section)”.


Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 108–405, § 202(a)(2)(A), in introductory provisions, inserted “or units of local government” after “eligible States” and “or unit of local government” after “State”.

Subsec. (a)(2). Pub. L. 108–405, § 202(a)(2)(B), inserted “, including samples from rape kits, samples from other sexual assault evidence, and samples taken in cases without an identified suspect” before period at end.

Subsec. (a)(3). Pub. L. 108–405, § 202(a)(2)(C), (b)(1)(A), struck out “within the State” after “local government” and inserted “(1) or” before “(2)”.


Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 108–405, § 202(a)(3)(A), in introductory provisions, inserted “or unit of local government” after “State” in two places and “, as required by the Attorney General” after “application shall”.


Subsec. (b)(3). Pub. L. 108–405, § 202(a)(3)(C), inserted “or unit of local government” after “that the State”.


Subsec. (b)(5). Pub. L. 108–405, § 202(a)(3)(E), inserted “or unit of local government” after “State” and substituted semicolon for period at end.


Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 108–405, § 202(b)(3), amended heading and text of subsec. (c) generally. Prior to amendment, text read as follows: “A State that proposes to allocate grant amounts under paragraph (4) or (5) of subsection (b) of this section for the purposes specified in paragraph (2) or (3) of subsection (a) of this section shall use such allocated
amounts to conduct or facilitate DNA analyses of those samples that relate to crimes in connection with which there
are no suspects.”

Subsec. (d)(1). Pub. L. 108–405, § 202(a)(4)(A), substituted “A plan pursuant to subsection (b)(1) of this section”
for “The plan” in introductory provisions and struck out “within the State” after “local government” in subpars. (A)
and (B).


as follows: “A grant for the purposes specified in paragraph (1) or (2) of subsection (a) of this section may be made
in the form of a voucher for laboratory services, which may be redeemed at a laboratory operated by a private entity
approved by the Attorney General that satisfies quality assurance standards. The Attorney General may make payment
to such a laboratory for the analysis of DNA samples using amounts authorized for those purposes under subsection
(i) of this section.”


Subsec. (e)(2). Pub. L. 108–405, § 202(a)(5)(B), inserted “or unit of local government” after “State”.

Subsec. (f). Pub. L. 108–405, § 202(a)(6), inserted “or unit of local government” after “State” in introductory
provisions.

Subsec. (g)(1). Pub. L. 108–405, § 202(a)(7)(A), inserted “or unit of local government” after “State”.

Subsec. (g)(2). Pub. L. 108–405, § 202(a)(7)(B), inserted “or units of local government” after “States”.

Subsec. (h). Pub. L. 108–405, § 202(a)(8), inserted “or unit of local government” after “State” in pars. (1) and (2).

Subsec. (i)(1) to (5). Pub. L. 108–405, § 202(b)(5), substituted (1) to (5) for former pars. (1) and (2) which read
as follows:

“(1) For grants for the purposes specified in paragraph (1) of such subsection—

“(A) $15,000,000 for fiscal year 2001;
“(B) $15,000,000 for fiscal year 2002; and
“(C) $15,000,000 for fiscal year 2003.

“(2) For grants for the purposes specified in paragraphs (2) and (3) of such subsection—

“(A) $25,000,000 for fiscal year 2001;
“(B) $50,000,000 for fiscal year 2002;
“(C) $25,000,000 for fiscal year 2003; and
“(D) $25,000,000 for fiscal year 2004.”

Subsec. (k) to (m). Pub. L. 108–405, § 202(b)(6), added subsecs. (k) to (m).

Sense of Congress Regarding the Obligation of Grantee States to Ensure
Access to Post-Conviction DNA Testing and Competent Counsel in Capital
Cases

Pub. L. 106–561, § 4, Dec. 21, 2000, 114 Stat. 2791, provided that:

“(a) Findings.—Congress finds that—

“(1) over the past decade, deoxyribonucleic acid testing (referred to in this section as ‘DNA testing’) has emerged as
the most reliable forensic technique for identifying criminals when biological material is left at a crime scene;

“(2) because of its scientific precision, DNA testing can, in some cases, conclusively establish the guilt or innocence
of a criminal defendant;

“(3) in other cases, DNA testing may not conclusively establish guilt or innocence, but may have significant probative
value to a finder of fact;

“(4) DNA testing was not widely available in cases tried prior to 1994;

“(5) new forensic DNA testing procedures have made it possible to get results from minute samples that could not
previously be tested, and to obtain more informative and accurate results than earlier forms of forensic DNA testing
could produce, resulting in some cases of convicted inmates being exonerated by new DNA tests after earlier tests had failed to produce definitive results;

“(6) DNA testing can and has resulted in the post-conviction exoneration of more than 75 innocent men and women, including some under sentence of death;

“(7) in more than a dozen cases, post-conviction DNA testing that has exonerated an innocent person has also enhanced public safety by providing evidence that led to the apprehension of the actual perpetrator;

“(8) experience has shown that it is not unduly burdensome to make DNA testing available to inmates in appropriate cases;

“(9) under current Federal and State law, it is difficult to obtain post-conviction DNA testing because of time limits on introducing newly discovered evidence;

“(10) the National Commission on the Future of DNA Evidence, a Federal panel established by the Department of Justice and comprised of law enforcement, judicial, and scientific experts, has urged that post-conviction DNA testing be permitted in the relatively small number of cases in which it is appropriate, notwithstanding procedural rules that could be invoked to preclude such testing, and notwithstanding the inability of an inmate to pay for the testing;

“(11) only a few States have adopted post-conviction DNA testing procedures;

“(12) States have received millions of dollars in DNA-related grants, and more funding is needed to improve State forensic facilities and to reduce the nationwide backlog of DNA samples from convicted offenders and crime scenes that need to be tested or retested using upgraded methods;

“(13) States that accept such financial assistance should not deny the promise of truth and justice for both sides of our adversarial system that DNA testing offers;

“(14) post-conviction DNA testing and other post-conviction investigative techniques have shown that innocent people have been sentenced to death in this country;

“(15) a constitutional error in capital cases is incompetent defense lawyers who fail to present important evidence that the defendant may have been innocent or does not deserve to be sentenced to death; and

“(16) providing quality representation to defendants facing loss of liberty or life is essential to fundamental due process and the speedy final resolution of judicial proceedings.

“(b) Sense of Congress.—It is the sense of Congress that—

“(1) Congress should condition forensic science-related grants to a State or State forensic facility on the State’s agreement to ensure post-conviction DNA testing in appropriate cases; and

“(2) Congress should work with the States to improve the quality of legal representation in capital cases through the establishment of standards that will assure the timely appointment of competent counsel with adequate resources to represent defendants in capital cases at each stage of the proceedings.”