

# Applying for NCS-X Grants

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In the past year or so, PRI has received several calls from agencies seeking grants related to converting to NIBRS through the NCS-X initiative. Accordingly, we are sharing the guidance we provided herein. If you are applying for an NCS-X grant, like any other grant, there are some things to know specific to this kind of funding that will help increase your chances of getting it. This information is based on our experience working with other grant awarded agencies.

## **First, the basics...**

- Don't reinvent the wheel. We have provided links to a list of grantee agencies along with an NCS-X LE only forum to network with others at our **NCS-X Resource Center**:  
<https://policerecordsmanagement.com/ncs-x-nibrs-resource-center>.  
Inquire about getting copies of grant applications from awarded agencies to see their approach. We have also provided a document center providing all of the FBI SRS/NIBRS guides and other resources you'll need, all in one place.
- The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) lists current grant solicitations info here:  
<https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=fun> NOTE: BJS will be issuing 2017-2018 NIBRS grants in the near future. Be sure to review previous solicitations here:  
<https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=fua&yr=2017> to help you prepare your application. BJS has also included recorded transcripts of phone conferences with NCS-X agencies which include Q&A sessions regarding the NIBRS project.
- BJS issues two types of grants relative to assisting local agency NIBRS efforts: 1) **NCS-X Implementation Assistance Program: Support for Small and Medium Local Law Enforcement Agencies** and 2) **NCS-X Implementation Assistance Program Support for Large Local Agencies**.

## **What to Include In Your Application**

Future solicitations will likely have the same or similar elements and requirements as the previous year. Be sure to read the full solicitation very closely- they typically include specific instructions all the way down to the type and size font to use. The following info summarizes the key sections to help give you a head start; it is what typically is required in your application:

**Project Abstract, Program Narrative, Budget Detail Worksheet, Budget Narrative, project implementation timeline, and résumés/curriculum vitae of key agency or contracted personnel.**

- **Project Abstract.** BJS considers the Project Abstract to be very important. It is a 400 word or less introductory description of your project. Describe at a high-level what you are seeking, what the funding will be used for, how the funding will be managed and descriptors of the fact that your agency is well prepared for this effort and has started planning already via formation of a committee etc.
- **Program Narrative.** This is the meat and potatoes of your application and is quite detailed. The 2017 solicitation stated, “The program narrative section of the application should not exceed 30 double-spaced pages in a 12-point font with 1-inch margins. If included in the main body of the program narrative, tables, charts, figures, and other illustrations count toward the 30-page limit for the narrative section.” It further stated:

**“Statement of the Problem**

- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the need for IBR by LE agencies and the goals of the solicitation to facilitate IBR from small- and medium-sized local agencies.
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the current status of incident-based crime reporting in their state. For agencies in states without a current NIBRS-certified state program, demonstrate an understanding of the state’s plans for establishing IBR in the state and becoming certified by the FBI to report incident-based data to NIBRS.
- Demonstrate clear understanding of the state pipeline for crime reporting and the need to report to the state UCR Program incident-based data that meet the state IBR requirements.
- Demonstrate understanding of the FBI’s NIBRS and the difference between a state IBR standard and the FBI’s NIBRS standard.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the impediments to local LE agencies to reporting incident-based data with all of the required NIBRS elements.

### **Project Design and Implementation**

- Articulate a clear plan to report IBR data to the state UCR Program or directly to the FBI, as applicable. The application should include a well-developed plan for transitioning the local agency to IBR and submitting IBR data to the state UCR Program or directly to the FBI. If applicable, the applicant should also include a plan to transition from being a direct FBI reporter to reporting through the state pipeline when the state program has the capacity to receive these data. Activities outlined in the application address in detail the required elements indicated above in the section “Statement of Work and Deliverables.”
- Show that the proposed project is justified and feasible. Clearly demonstrate the ability to accomplish the project tasks outlined in the proposal, and the ability to complete the tasks and meet the project goals within the proposed time frame.
- Demonstrate an awareness of potential pitfalls of the proposed project design and has suggested feasible and reasonable actions to minimize or mitigate those pitfalls.

### **Capabilities and Competencies**

- Provide sufficient justification that the proposed project staff (i.e., the project lead and other individuals and organizations) identified in the application who will be significantly involved in supporting the activities outlined in the proposal have the necessary qualifications and experience to fulfill the goals of the project and to complete project tasks.
- Provide sufficient information on the capabilities and competencies of all proposed contract staff who will be used for project activities. If the staff are not yet employed, provide sufficient detail regarding the capabilities and competencies the local agency will seek for such staff.
- Demonstrate the ability of the organization to manage the overall project effort.
- Make a clear connection between the capabilities and competencies of the proposed project staff, including the applicant organization, and the scope of the proposed project and activities required to achieve the project goals.

### **Plan for Collecting the Data Required for the Solicitation’s Performance Measures**

- OJP will require each successful applicant to submit specific performance measures data as part of its reporting under the award (see “General Information about Post Federal Award Reporting Requirements” in Section F. Federal Award Administration Information). The performance measures correlate to the goals, objectives, and deliverables identified under “Goals, Objectives, and Deliverables” in Section A. Program Description.

### **Budget Detail Worksheet and Budget Narrative**

- These documents describe in detail how the money will be spent. A sample Budget Detail Worksheet can be found [here](#). If the document doesn’t open in your browser save the .PDF then open it.

The Budget Detail Worksheet should break out costs by year. For questions pertaining to budget and examples of allowable and unallowable costs, see the DOJ Grants Financial Guide. The budget narrative should thoroughly and clearly describe every category of expense listed in the Budget Detail Worksheet. OJP expects proposed budgets to be complete, cost effective, and allowable (e.g., reasonable, allocable, and necessary for project activities).”

### **Source: 2017 NCS-X Implementation Assistance Program: Phase VI – Support for Small and Medium Local Law Enforcement Agencies**

In the interest of full disclosure, yes, of course we want to see you win a grant! These grants do include funding for consulting services- the very kind that PRI offers. We are the premier national police records and IT management-consulting firm with a focus on and key offering of crime data project management, conversion, auditing, implementation and training services.

To that end, we have seen agencies exclude themselves from getting the very assistance they are seeking because of the way their RFP’s were written. An agency seeking BJS funding for the purposes of obtaining, in part, consulting services should strongly consider the following case in point.

The California Department of Justice, Illinois State Police and Boston Police Department all recently issued RFPs for NIBRS consulting services. What do they have in common? Each of these agencies had to re-post the RFPs a second time. And the Illinois State Police still hasn’t been able to select a consultant. Why?

The answer lies in the RFPs themselves and is why two of the agencies didn't get a bid from PRI—a company built specifically for this kind of work. The reason is simple.

Due to the complexity of NIBRS and the level of expertise required to do this work, agencies tend to write overly complex or restrictive requirements in their RFPs thinking that doing so will ensure they get the right person for the job. For example, one recent RFP required the following:

*“Bidders must provide three agencies (name and contact information) in which the bidder has led or significantly participated in a successful NIBRS conversion planning and/or implementation project involving a city, county, or state law enforcement agency within the last 10 years”.*

Requiring bidders to show proof of experience and prior work is common and is something that ordinarily is fair and expected except however in this case it poses a real problem; how many local agencies issued RFPs for NIBRS conversion services in the last 10 years? Prior to the FBI's formal announcement on June 10, 2016 that UCR Summary Reporting is being phased out, none. PRI does not know of any being issued and thus meeting this requirement is impossible.

Given this fact, realize that experience and expertise can be proven (and required in an RFP) in a way that will ensure the agency is getting a qualified consultant without excluding them altogether. For example, a better-worded requirement would read:

*“Bidders must describe their experience including what roles, scope of work, training and expertise they have provided to law enforcement agencies in the following areas (list a minimum of 3 agencies):*

- *UCR Summary Reporting System*
- *NIBRS*
- *Data management*
- *Data conversion*
- *RMS technology*
- *Case management*
- *etc. etc.”*

Language can be confusing. It can also be written in a way that communicates the wrong message. To a requirement written as suggested above, PRI could have and certainly would have responded, as we have done extensive consulting and training work in this field including:

- Large scale crime stats audits including the review and correction of faulty data and implementation of systems and procedures to prevent future errors.

- The review of thousands of police reports for comparison against NIBRS standards, implementation of enhanced report review procedures, and providing NIBRS training to hundreds of agencies across the country;
- Development and implementation of quality control measures built for the purpose of ensuring NIBRS certification and acceptable error-rate levels (4% or less);
- Needs assessments, cost analysis/ROI studies and implementation of NIBRS compliant RMS;
- Systems design and technical and functional specifications requirements gap analyses;
- Business process re-engineering specific to crime reporting workflow designed to ensure proper creation, submission and review of crime reports and NIBRS data;
- Development of a propriety NIBRS training curriculum for officers, supervisors and records personnel. Ours is the only national NIBRS training seminar customized to each state's requirements. This training has been provided to over 1400 agencies and is available online.

Our expertise and experience in providing services related to NIBRS is unparalleled. It is what we do. In business since 2008, we have over 1500 clients. Yet, the aforementioned agencies won't benefit from such a resource due only to the way something was written in an RFP.

There is a saying in business that describes how it's just sometimes best to say no to a job or a potential client. Writing such restrictive purchasing documents leads to one of two results: 1) elimination of a perfectly qualified bidder or 2) it sends a message that the client is probably going to be very difficult to work for. As for the latter, we'll simply say no to the opportunity.

As for you, of course we want your business but, we also have a genuine interest in you succeeding- a win-win scenario. Writing RFPs which exclude qualified candidates is a zero sum game- no one benefits. As our mission statement says, we're here for a very clear purpose:

*"Improve public safety in our clients communities by ensuring the delivery of accurate, timely and efficient management of agency records and data through the utilization of tomorrow's technology and effective business process."*

Call us anytime for further assistance; we come from law enforcement and we're happy to help.