

CITY OF OAKLAND

# AGENDA REPORT

**TO:** Edward D. Reiskin  
City Administrator

**FROM:** LeRonne L. Armstrong  
Chief of Police

**SUBJECT:** FY 2020-21 OPD Crime Lab  
Coverdell Grant

**DATE:** May 3, 2021

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City Administrator Approval 

Date: Jun 2, 2021

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Authorizing The City Administrator Or Designee To Accept And Appropriate Grant Funds In An Amount Not To Exceed Fifty-Nine Thousand Eighty-Two Dollars (\$59,082) From The California Governor's Office Of Emergency Services (CALOES), For The Fiscal Year 2020-21 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Program, During The Grant Period Of January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021, To Support The Oakland Police Department (OPD) Crime Laboratory Operations.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Oakland Police Department (OPD) was awarded a one-year grant of fifty-nine thousand eighty-two dollars (\$59,082) from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) for Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Program (the Coverdell program). The grant period is January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021. Funding will be invested in a range of comprehensive conferences, training, and training-related travel expenses for OPD Crime Laboratory (Crime Lab) staff; many of the trainings are not only required for staff, but critical for OPD's Crime Lab to maintain its accreditation. Additionally, grant funds will be used to purchase crime scene supplies and tools and a variety of Crime Lab supplies and equipment (e.g. crime scene response materials and crime scene storage materials, quality assurance balance calibration devices and thermometer, computer and drug analysis instrumentation and standards, ammunition for firearms test fires, (DNA<sup>1</sup>) testing kits, software and computers for databases including (CODIS<sup>2</sup>). Funds will allow up to seventeen (17) staff in multiple forensic science areas to attend nine training events.

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<sup>1</sup> DNA = Deoxyribonucleic Acid; the hereditary material in humans and almost all other organisms. Nearly every cell in a person's body has the same DNA.

<sup>2</sup> CODIS is the acronym for the Combined DNA Index System and is the generic term used to describe the FBI's program of support for criminal justice DNA databases as well as the software used to run these databases - <https://www.fbi.gov/services/laboratory/biometric-analysis/codis/codis-and-ndis-fact-sheet>

## **BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY**

The Coverdell program award grants to states and units of local government to help improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science and medical examiner and coroner services. The funding amount of this award is formula-based. The grant rules allow for funds to be used to train and employ forensic laboratory personnel, as needed, to help eliminate forensic analysis case backlogs, and fund related crime lab miscellaneous expenses.<sup>3</sup> In particular, a state or unit of local government that receives a Coverdell Grant must use the grant for the following purposes:

1. Carry out all or a substantial part of a program intended to improve the quality and timeliness of forensic science or medical examiner and coroner services in the State, including those services provided by laboratories operated by the State and those operated by units of local government within the State;
2. Eliminate a backlog in the analysis of forensic science evidence, including, among other things, a backlog with respect to firearms examination, latent prints, toxicology, controlled substances, forensic pathology, questioned documents, and trace evidence;
3. Train, assist, and employ forensic laboratory personnel as needed to eliminate such a backlog;
4. Address emerging forensic science issues (such as statistics, contextual bias, and uncertainty of measurement) and emerging forensic science technology (such as high throughput automation, statistical software, and new types of instrumentation); and
5. Educate and train forensic pathologists.

OPD has received fourteen (14) Coverdell grants since 2008. This grant for the 2021 calendar year would represent OPD's fifteenth grant since program inception.

## **ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

The OPD Criminalistics Laboratory (Crime Lab) does not have an independent budget for staff training. The Crime Lab needs additional funds to provide training to maintain staff with critical forensic certifications. OPD's Crime Lab has a goal of achieving 100 percent certification for Crime Lab scientific staff (the current level is approximately 80 percent). Crime Lab staff are either certified by the American Board of Criminalistics (ABC), the Association of Firearms and Toolmarks Examiners (AFTE), the International Association for Identification (IAI), or are seeking relevant external certifications in their specialty area.

Certification maintenance requires each certificate holder to demonstrate on-going professional development through training. OPD's laboratory ANSI-ASQ<sup>4</sup> National Accreditation Board (ANAB) accreditation requires demonstrated continuing education for all scientific staff. In addition to these requirements, OPD expects this training to improve skills, knowledge, and overall capability. This training is critical for maintaining the quality standards of Crime Lab forensic work. **Table 1** below details the expected Crime Lab staff trainings which will be completed with 2020 Coverdell Grant funding.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nij.gov/topics/forensics/lab-operations/capacity/nfsia/pages/welcome.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ansi.org/?\\_ga=2.21669245.7189685.1620069594-1869418862.1620069594](https://www.ansi.org/?_ga=2.21669245.7189685.1620069594-1869418862.1620069594)

**Table 1: Crime Lab Proposed Trainings in 2021**

Individual	Title of Course	Purpose	Cost
<b>Drug Analysis Unit Related Training</b>			
1 Drug Unit Analyst	American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS)	Annual conference on a wide range of forensic topics	\$185
<b>Forensic Biology Unit Related Training</b>			
3 Analysts	CAC <sup>5</sup> meeting registration local	Semi-annual meeting of California Forensic Professionals	\$900
2 Supervisors	American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors	Annual Symposium focused on enhancing leadership and management in a forensic laboratory	\$7,236
<b>Quality Assurance, Accreditation, Crime Scene, Laboratory Management and Lab-wide Training</b>			
1 Analyst	California Criminalistics Institute	Crime Scene Processing I	\$1,064
2 Analysts	California Criminalistics Institute	Crime Scene Processing II	\$2,128
2 Analysts	California Criminalistics Institute	Forensic Photography	\$1,064
Quality Assurance Program Supervisor	Association of Forensic Quality Assurance Managers (AFQAM)	Training for quality managers in issues related to accreditation and risk management	\$1,795
3 Analysts	ANAB Assessor Tuition	Coursework to become an assessor for ANAB. Assist with laboratory internal audits and assessing external labs to aid in adoption of best practices.	\$3,585
3 Analysts	ANAB Auditor Tuition	Course to become an auditor for ISO standards. Assist lab internal audits to aid in upkeep of lab accreditation.	\$2,625
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$20,582</b>

The budget for the 2020 Coverdell Grant affords the laboratory the opportunity to fund critical projects besides training. There are numerous important projects that cannot be tackled for lack of equipment or funds. This grant allows these important projects to move forward and include augmenting crime scene response capability, purchasing drug analysis standards and equipment, procuring ammunition for firearms test fires and software upgrades, funding calibration services, DNA testing kits, and computer hardware.

<sup>5</sup> CAC = California Association of Criminalists

**FISCAL IMPACT**

CalOES will grant \$59,082 to OPD's Crime Lab over a one-year period to accomplish grant objectives. Specifically, funds will be spent on the following:

<b>Use of Funds</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Forensic Science Training Events and Related Travel	\$20,582
Supplies, Tools and Equipment for Crime Scene Response, Quality Assurance and Management, Drug Analysis Unit, Firearms Unit, Forensic Biology Unit and Latent Print Unit	\$38,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$59,082</b>

Funds will be allocated in the Criminalistics fund (2112), Crime Lab (102610), in the Project to be determined.

**PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST**

No public outreach was required in the development of this report and resolution beyond standard City Council meeting noticing requirements.

**COORDINATION**

This report and legislation have been reviewed by the Office of the City Attorney and the Budget Bureau.

**SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

***Economic:*** There are no economic opportunities identified in this report.

***Environmental:*** There are no environmental opportunities identified in this report.

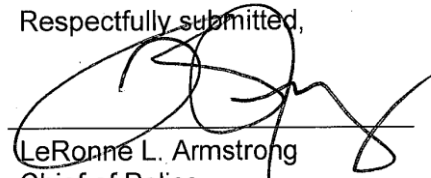
***Race and Social Equity:*** The activities completed under this grant will better position OPD's Crime Lab to maintain high quality services and training for staff; better Crime Lab services will benefit Oakland residents and visitors through robust investigations that support crime victims and public safety.

**ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Authorizing The City Administrator Or Designee To Accept And Appropriate Grant Funds In An Amount Not To Exceed Fifty-Nine Thousand Eighty-Two Dollars (\$59,082) From The California Governor's Office Of Emergency Services (CALOES), For The Fiscal Year 2020-21 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Program, During The Grant Period Of January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021, To Support The Oakland Police Department (OPD) Crime Laboratory Operations.

For questions concerning this report, please contact Sandra Sachs, OPD Criminalistics Laboratory Manager, at 510-238-2108.

Respectfully submitted,



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