



Board Agenda Item 28

DATE: November 5, 2024

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBMITTED BY: John Zaroni, Sheriff-Coroner-Public Administrator

SUBJECT: Retroactive 2024 DNA Backlog Reduction Grant Application Acceptance and Agreement

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

- 1. Retroactively approve and authorize the Sheriff's Office previous submittal of an online grant application on behalf of the County of Fresno to the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, for the 2024 Forensic DNA Capacity Enhancement and Backlog Reduction Program Grant (\$458,511);**
- 2. Retroactively approve, ratify and authorize the Sheriff's, or his designee's, execution of retroactive Grant Award Agreement Number 15PBJA-24-GG-02612-DNAX, in the Justice Grants System, which requires compliance with assurances and certifications that relate to conduct during the performance of the award/agreement on behalf of the County of Fresno to the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance for the 2024 Forensic Casework DNA Backlog Reduction Grant, effective October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2026 in the amount of \$458,511;**
- 3. Authorize the Sheriff, or his designee, to sign and submit claims for reimbursement, activity reports, notices, extend the grant ending date to expend allocated funding, and other related documents consistent with the grant award; and**
- 4. Approve and authorize the Clerk of the Board to execute Budget Transfer No. 30 (\$58,500) transferring appropriation within the Sheriff-Coroner-Public Administrator's Org 3111, from Account 7295 (Professional & Specialized Ser), 7415 (Trans, Travel & Education) to Account 8300 (Equipment) for the purchase of a Thermomixer C, CODIS Server Computer and two (2) Plate Centrifuge.**

There is no increase in Net County Cost associated with the recommended actions. Divisions of the Department of Justice (DOJ) have awarded this grant to assist local forensic laboratories that conduct DNA analysis with reducing casework backlog. This grant continuation will fund the purchase and replacement of laboratory equipment, laboratory staff forensic training, DNA case analysis, and a dedicated Criminalist position to assist the Sheriff's Forensic Laboratory in reducing this turnaround time. The competitive application was submitted electronically on May 30, 2024, to the DOJ Bureau of Justice Assistance to meet the application deadline. The Sheriff's Office was notified on September 27, 2024 that the application was preliminarily accepted for funding. The first recommended action retroactively approves submittal of the online grant application on behalf of the County. The second recommended action retroactively authorizes and ratifies the Sheriff's, or his designee's, execution of the retroactive agreement. As required by the DOJ, all documentation must be signed electronically and submitted via the new DOJ web application. The third recommended action authorizes the Sheriff or his designee to sign and submit required documents associated with this grant agreement. The fourth recommended action authorizes the Clerk of the Board to execute a budget transfer for the purchase of a Thermomixer C, CODIS Server Computer and two (2) Plate

Centrifuge. This item is countywide.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

If the recommended actions are not approved, the grant award will be cancelled, resulting in a de-obligation of the allocated Federal funding. This will result in a backlog of DNA cases in the Sheriff's Office Forensic Laboratory that can take an average of 70 days to be processed.

RETROACTIVE AGREEMENT:

The recommended agreement is retroactive to October 1, 2024. The competitive application was submitted electronically on May 30, 2024, to the DOJ Bureau of Justice Assistance to meet the application deadline. The Sheriff's Office was notified on September 27, 2024 that the application was preliminarily accepted for funding.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no additional Net County Cost associated with the recommended actions. The award includes \$458,511 for the 2024 Forensic DNA Backlog Reduction Grant, with no match requirement. The total cost of the grant will be utilized for the service, maintenance, and calibration of specific laboratory equipment, the cost for the continued Salaries and Benefits for the dedicated Criminalist Specialist and the Criminalist I position as well as cover the cost for our laboratory staff to attend forensic training workshops. Grant allocations will be included in future requested budgets. Budget Transfer No. 30 will transfer DNA grant appropriations of \$58,500 from Account 7295 (Professional & Specialized), 7415 (Trans, Travel & Education) to Account 8300 (Equipment), program number 92024 for the purchase of a Thermomixer C, program number 92025 for the purchase of a CODIS Server Computer and program number 92026 for the purchase of two (2) Plate Centrifuge. The Sheriff's Office anticipates expending the full amount of the grant prior to September 30, 2026.

DISCUSSION:

The Sheriff's Office Forensic Laboratory has been awarded the 2024 DNA Backlog Reduction and Capacity Enhancement grant through the DOJ Bureau of Justice Assistance for the time period of October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2026. Currently, a dedicated Criminalist Specialist and Criminalist I positions are funded by the current 2023 grant and prior DNA Backlog grants and have been working DNA cases and reducing the backlog. However, it takes an average of 70 days to process, record, screen, and analyze a forensic biology/DNA case from submission to delivery of results to the submitting agency.

Your Board approved the 2023 DNA Backlog Reduction grant on November 28, 2023, which is currently in progress. Your Board approved the prior 2022 DNA Backlog Reduction grant on March 28, 2023.

The grant funds in the amount of \$458,511 will be used to further reduce or eliminate backlogged DNA casework. The Sheriff's Office is recommending the purchase and replacement of laboratory equipment, maintenance, and service of equipment, as well as forensic training workshops for laboratory staff, outsourcing of DNA cases, and continued funding of the Criminalist Specialist and Criminalist I position to decrease the 70-day turnaround time for the analysis of sexual assault, homicide and other requested DNA evidence received by the laboratory. This includes the processing of sexual assault kits and autopsy kits received from within Fresno County.

The 2024 Forensic DNA Backlog Reduction Grant funds in the amount of \$458,511 will be utilized as follows:

- Continued funding of dedicated Criminalist Specialist position \$221,067
- Continued funding of dedicated Criminalist I position \$121,979
- Travel to training for four DNA Forensic Lab staff members \$19,565
- Purchase and replacement of specific laboratory equipment \$95,900

The recommended grant agreement requires that the individual authorized by the County to execute the agreement declare and certify that (1) they have the authority to make the declaration and certification on behalf of the County, (2) that to the best of their knowledge and belief, that they have conducted a diligent review of all terms and conditions of the award, including assurances and certifications, and have the legal authority to accept the award, (3) they accept the award on behalf of the applicant, and (4) that they understand that the DOJ will rely upon this declaration and certification as a material representation and the criminal and administrative penalties for materially false, fictitious or fraudulent information and certifications.

It should be noted that once the Award acceptance document is executed by the Sheriff or his designee, and the DOJ, the award documents become the final agreement between the County and the DOJ. As required by the DOJ, all documentation will be signed electronically and submitted via the new DOJ web application.

REFERENCE MATERIAL:

BAI#33, November 28, 2023
BAI#29, March 28, 2023
BAI #31, February 22, 2022
BAI #17, January 12, 2021

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED AND/OR ON FILE:

On file with Clerk - Grant Application
On file with Clerk - Grant Award / Agreement
On file with Clerk - Budget Transfer No. 30

CAO ANALYST:

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